

**THE NOVELISTIC POEM AND THE POETICAL NOVEL: TOWARDS A  
THEORY OF GENERIC INTERRELATION IN THE ROMANTIC PERIOD**

by

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## Abstract

This dissertation examines the shifting set of formal and conceptual relations that have structured the intertwined development and reception of “the novel” and “poetry” since the Romantic period. In Part One, I focus on the continuing rise of the novel in the age of best-selling poetry, arguing that narrative poetry and the novel participated in a shared history of narrative innovation. I take the popular and formally innovative poems of Walter Scott as a particularly important example of poetry’s contribution to this shared history. Specifically, I argue that Scott’s knowledge of the ballad tradition and his modern experiments with poetry in that mode enabled him to introduce narrative techniques into the novel that prepare the way for the deployment of free indirect discourse in the novels of Jane Austen and her successors. More broadly, I attempt to describe a theory of generic interrelation that is capable of identifying and explaining the interrelated formal development of works written during the Romantic period.

In Part Two, I work to recover and analyze the complex history of perceptions about genre from the Romantic period through the twentieth century. Since the Romantic period itself, many thinkers have been interested in identifying what is essentially poetic about poetry, and, as a closely related matter, in determining what can distinguish poetry from prose and the novel. But, as narrative poetry has declined in popularity, and as the novel has emerged as the dominant modern genre, the terms of these discussions—and the experiences and expectations of reading that prompt them—have not remained static. The reception of Lord Byron’s *Don Juan* provides a particularly fascinating example of this gradual change in generic perception. While in the nineteenth century there was a widespread conviction that the poem was too shockingly inappropriate to really qualify as

“Poetry”—a poem that was not at all poetic—by the twentieth century critics are praising it for its novelistic features. I trace the long history of *Don Juan*’s reception as a way of drawing attention to an underappreciated feature of literary history: that perceptions of genres themselves are subject to historical change.

## Acknowledgments

In the fall of 2003—my freshman year at Rutgers University—I haphazardly enrolled in a class on twentieth century poetry. I expected to be a philosophy major, and I didn't particularly like poetry, so it's not at all clear what I was thinking. What seemed to be a small decision at the time actually became one of the more momentous in my academic career. And so, I'd like to begin by thanking the many dedicated teachers in the department of English at Rutgers University, without whom I would never have even thought to pursue a serious study of literature. Harriet Davidson deserves special recognition in this regard, as she was the first to show me how poetry can provide nourishment for the curious and ambitious mind. Billy Galperin, too, was an invaluable undergraduate advisor, and he has been incredibly generous in his willingness to continue reading my work—including this entire dissertation—throughout my years as a graduate student.

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## Table of Contents

	Abstract	i
	Acknowledgments	iv
	List of Figures	viii
1	INTRODUCTION	
	Formal and Conceptual Approaches to the Study of Generic Interrelation	
	<b>Part One</b>	
24	CHAPTER ONE	
	Form and Generic Interrelation in the Romantic Period	
54	CHAPTER TWO	
	The Form of Media History: Stabilizing Narrator-Space in the Poetry of Walter Scott	
81	CHAPTER THREE	
	The Future of Narration: Stabilizing Narrator-Space in <i>Marmion</i> and <i>The Lady of the Lake</i>	
126	CHAPTER FOUR	
	“The Custom of Storytellers”: Fielding, <i>Waverley</i> , and Austen	
	<b>Part Two</b>	
179	CHAPTER FIVE	
	Becoming a Novel: <i>Don Juan</i> and the Historical Perception of Genre	
230	CONCLUSION	
	Notes	236
	Bibliography	265
	Curriculum Vita	274

## List of Figures

- 139    FIGURE 4.1  
      Mapping Fielding and Scott
- 208    FIGURE 5.1  
      The *Literary Gazette* De-Lineates Byron

## INTRODUCTION

### **Formal and Conceptual Approaches to the Study of Generic Interrelation**

As Stuart Curran has observed, “it is hard for a later culture to grasp” the extent to which Romantic-era British culture was “simply mad for poetry.”<sup>1</sup> Not only have novels emerged as the dominant, and nearly exclusive form of popular literary entertainment, but, as a related matter, narrative or story-based poetry has almost entirely ceased to be written. Instead, “lyric”—often written to be short, complex, and difficult—is now nearly synonymous with the category of “poetry.” Thus, as Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins have memorably claimed, poetics in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has witnessed a “super-sizing of the lyric.”<sup>2</sup>

Recent adherents of the so-called New Lyric studies like Jackson and Prins—and the thinkers whom they claim as their intellectual ancestors—have attempted to problematize and analyze this strange history of the lyric, often producing results so surprising as to demand a rethinking of many of our most basic concepts and practices of literary and genre history.<sup>3</sup> Gerard Genette’s essay, “The Architext,” is perhaps the most damning of these recent assessments. Equal parts intellectual history and critique, the power of “The Architext” consists in two basic claims: first, that nearly every modern thinker of any import has accepted and helped to proliferate a view that “lyric” is one of the three “natural” (and ancient) divisions in literary writing (the other two being drama and epic); and, second, that this belief is merely a “retrospective illusion . . . deeply rooted in our conscious, or unconscious, literary minds.”<sup>4</sup> Instead, as Genette shows, the elevation of lyric to a basic literary category is an invention of early-modern thought, and

the many kinds of writing it describes have never been coherently related to each other. The term has become a “negative catch-all (for everything that is neither narrative or dramatic),” with the result that we have come to think of lyric both as an overarching category that contains many subgenres *and*, since the Romantic period, as its own distinctive genre that contains a “thematic element [that] eludes purely formal or linguistic definitions.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, in the words of Jackson and Prins, while “we take it for granted that we know what a lyric is,” it is at the same time as “notoriously difficult to define lyric as it is impossible to define poetry itself.”<sup>6</sup>

This elevation of lyric to its current place of prestige is a significant chapter in the history of poetics, but it also has important repercussions for a study of generic interrelation. Indeed, in the relatively sparse landscape of studies that examine the relation between poetry and the novel, lyric and lyricized notions of poetry are practically universal.<sup>7</sup> While this is true of recent criticism, its origin can be traced back as far as the eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup> But, lyric is just one kind of poetry, and while the disproportionate attention it has received in the recent (and not-so-recent) history of poetics might suggest otherwise, it was in fact narrative poetry that was the dominant, most read, and most written form of poetry in the Romantic period.

In my dissertation I might be seen as picking up where the New Lyricists leave off, which is not to say that I dismiss the category of lyric altogether, but rather that I begin by trying to highlight and clarify problems of literary history that have been made obscure by the tendency to associate poetry with lyric. The chapters that follow are motivated by a constellation of formal, conceptual, and literary historical concerns that together entail an exploration of the significance of the relation between poetry and the

novel during the Romantic period. These concerns include: a desire to recuperate the importance of narrative poetry for our understanding of popular readership in the nineteenth century; an interest in examining the significance of narrative poetry's formal innovations, both on their own and in their influence on the continuing rise of the novel during this time; and to explore the particular experiences and theories of reading and writing that have, since the rise of the novel itself, contributed to our understanding of the novel and poetry as being both essentially related to, and essentially different from, each other. Because I draw on a diverse set of sources and discourses, I do not employ one overarching methodology for the dissertation as a whole. Rather, I attempt to identify and use tools that I take to be best suited to the particular question or questions under consideration. Thus, while the first half of the dissertation is concerned primarily with the formal interrelations between narrative poetry and the novel, the second half of the dissertation is concerned primarily with establishing a genealogy or history of the experiences of reading, the theories we use to explain these experiences, and the way in which those theories have constituted poetry and the novel as a binary opposition that continues to determine our understanding of them. While the intellectual history and the formal analysis do inform separate kinds of inquiry, I intend for them to be thought of as individual pillars upholding a single structure. Indeed, as will become clear, I explore how the intellectual history of the concepts of poetry and the novel has determined and limited the formal tools we use to analyze their relationship. The hope is that an uncovering of the historical bases of the terms can become a means for overcoming the limitations of those tools.

In Part One, I focus on the continuing rise of the novel in the age of best-selling poetry. Given that both narrative poetry and the novel are constructed on a foundation of narrative form, I examine the possibility that each genre contributed to, and partook of, a shared history of narrative innovation. I take the popular and formally innovative poems of Walter Scott as a particularly important example of poetry's contribution to this shared history. Specifically, I argue that Scott's knowledge of the ballad tradition and his modern experiments with poetry in that mode enabled him to introduce narrative techniques into the novel that prepare the way for the deployment of free indirect discourse in the novels of Jane Austen and her successors. More broadly, through an extensive encounter with the theories and practices of a number of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers—including Henry Fielding, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Scott, Lord Byron and Percy Shelley—I attempt to describe a theory of generic interrelation that is capable of identifying and explaining the interrelated formal development of poems and novels written during the Romantic period.

In the second part of the dissertation I work to recover the history of perceptions about genre that develop from the Romantic period through the twentieth century. I argue that this history is one that witnesses the binding of “poetry” and “the novel” (or prose) into a conceptual binary, and that one of its characteristic developments is exemplified in the way these two kinds of writing exchange contested territory with each other: poems come to be experienced as novelistic or prosaic, while many works of prose come to be appreciated for their poetic features. The reception of Lord Byron's *Don Juan* provides a particularly fascinating example of this gradual change in generic perception. While in the nineteenth century there was a widespread conviction that the poem was too



shockingly inappropriate to really qualify as “Poetry”—a poem that was not at all poetic—by the twentieth century critics were praising it for its novelistic features. I trace the long history of *Don Juan*’s reception as a way of drawing attention to an underappreciated feature of literary history: not, as is commonly understood, that genres change, or that the opinion of a work’s value is historically conditioned, but rather, that perceptions of genres themselves are subject to historical change—in short, that a poem can become a novel without changing a word of its content. This history of *Don Juan*’s reception serves as the central organizational focus of a broader examination of theories of the novel and poetry—from the early eighteenth century through the twentieth century and beyond—and how they have continuously relied on each other as a way of explaining not only what is unique about poetry and the novel, but also what kinds of experiences they produce in common with each other.

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The poems of Walter Scott are the texts I consult most extensively in part one of the dissertation. Today, there is of course little question about Scott’s importance—he is a canonical writer whose works are universally acknowledged as having played an essential role in the development of the novel in the nineteenth century. But his poetry, which was enormously successful in its day, is rarely considered to be an important part of his contribution to literary history. Instead, it is his work as a best-selling novelist—and often specifically *not* his work as a poet—that tends to draw critical attention and admiration. This feature of criticism is fairly widespread, and can be seen taking form at least as far back as 1960—one of the few times in recent critical history when the poetry

of Walter Scott was treated at any significant length—when Karl Kroeber offered the following evaluation of the best-selling author of the nineteenth century:

Only by accepting Scott's own cavalier attitude toward his art and by acknowledging that none of his writing bears the impress of intense artistry can we understand his enormous importance in the history of European literature. . . . Indeed, had Scott written even one novel or poem of complete artistic excellence the total impact of his work might have been less. For what one gains from the corpus of his writing is not so much any special enrichment of one's aesthetic experience as a broadening and a deepening of one's responsiveness to all of life.<sup>9</sup>

Aside from confirming Scott's apparent disdain for the quality of his own work—a public performance of modesty that he did not sustain in his anonymous self-reviews—Kroeber seems to struggle to find a compelling reason for studying an author whose apparently unassailable reputation in the nineteenth century had, by the 1960s, fallen into critical disrepair.<sup>10</sup>

Shortly after Kroeber's book was published, Georg Lukács's landmark *The Historical Novel* appeared in English translation (nearly three decades after it was originally written) causing a significant re-evaluation of the author of *Waverley* and his novelistic legacy. Since then, the study of Scott's novels has enjoyed something of a renaissance, while the study of Scott's poetry has continued its long decline. The last—and, as far as I have been able to determine, only—time that Scott's poetry was treated to a book-length study was in 1988, when Nancy Moore Goslee's *Scott the Rhymer* valiantly attempted to recuperate Scott's poetry for a late-twentieth-century academic

audience. But Goslee's efforts to return Scott's poetry "to the modern canon of Romantic poets"<sup>11</sup> did not prove to be successful in the long run: in the last twenty years or so—both in studies devoted entirely to Scott and in studies devoted entirely to the Romantic era and its legacy, in which Scott's literary output figures variously as a major or minor example—his poetry rarely receives explicit or extended critical discussion; and, when it does, it is most often introduced as a mere prelude to a treatment of his subsequent career as a novelist.<sup>12</sup> And, while there have been a few notable exceptions, the critical consensus on Scott's poetry appears to be either that it is not very interesting, or, even more damning, that it is not worth investigating to determine if it is interesting.<sup>13</sup> For example, there is no modern edition, critical or popular, of Scott's poetry (the edition of Scott's poetry that I use is a reprint of a delightfully illustrated edition from 1887); the massive two-volume edition of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* only includes the 100-line "Introduction" to *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* and a 16-line poem that appears in Scott's novel, *The Heart of Midlothian*; and the volume of the *Longman Anthology of British Literature* specifically devoted to "The Romantics and their Contemporaries" only includes one short ballad from Scott's ballad collection, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.<sup>14</sup>

It seems, then, that embarking on a serious study of Scott's poetry—on its own terms, and not simply as a context for his work as a novelist—calls for additional comment. After all, if the extent to which Scott's poetry is ignored is an accurate reflection of the "artistic excellence" or importance that Kroeber and others have apparently found lacking in it, then shouldn't his poetry continue to be considered, at best, of marginal value to the study of literary history? Over the course of Chapters 1-4, my

argument will be that a study of Scott's poetry does indeed offer an important case for an understanding of formal innovation during the Romantic period, and that we can continue to ignore it only at the unacceptably high price of misunderstanding some of the fundamental forces at work in the movements of literary history during this time. This argument begins by examining some features of the publishing industry, and how its growing sense of its own operations and its audiences affected the reading and, more importantly, the writing, of the Romantic period.

Scott's popularity is, in and of itself, sufficient reason to think that his poetry would have been influential for the development of all literary forms in the Romantic period—a point that is made persuasively in William St. Clair's justly celebrated *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Era*. During his lifetime, Scott's major poetic works sold more than 180,000 copies (before taking into account the significant offshore piracies), and they continued to be printed in even greater numbers after his death.<sup>15</sup> For example, Cadell's edition of *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, printed and distributed between the years of 1827 and 1849, alone sold more than 600,000 copies.<sup>16</sup> By the standards of the Romantic era, these numbers were enough to ensure that Scott, along with Lord Byron, was the best-selling poet of the age. The magnitude of their success is perhaps best illustrated by comparing it to the sales of other poets that tend to be more prominently associated with the Romantic era: as St. Clair claims, "Scott and Byron sold more poems in a normal afternoon than Shelley and Keats did during the whole of their lives."<sup>17</sup> Scott's dominance was so pervasive that, by the 1860s, he was "by several orders of magnitude the author whose works had sold the largest number of copies in the English-speaking world."<sup>18</sup>

But raw sales figures alone, even those as impressive as Scott's, do not tell the whole story. St. Clair makes it very clear that the price of books during the Romantic period was so high as virtually to prevent any but the richest classes from reading new books. Because of the length of copyright, books first published during the Romantic period did not come into the public domain until the Victorian period. Thus, unlike today, there was an extremely compelling economic motive for individuals not to buy copies of every book they'd want to read—most could never afford that—but instead to share their books, and the burden of paying for them, with each other. It's this logic that partially explains the notable expansion of reading societies and renting libraries during the Romantic period. The expansion of organized communities of readers prepares the way for one of St. Clair's more important arguments: that "the larger the sale . . . the more frequently a book was also rented. The bigger the sales, therefore, the bigger the multiplier needed to convert to readership."<sup>19</sup> And the correlation between large sales and even larger readership can help to illuminate one significant feature of the literary history: success in the literary marketplace generated its own kind of influence—influence that I argue can be measured by the extent to which it constrained and enabled contemporary writers (who were also readers) in their own paths to literary innovation.

It is perhaps needless to say that artists' creative capacities are affected by the relative popularity and success of their peers and competitors in the literary marketplace.<sup>20</sup> There are, however, reasons to think that literary production during the Romantic period was particularly, and newly, sensitive to these kinds of commercial influences in a way that it never had been previously, and that it never has been since. The main cause of this active interchange between market influences and literary

innovation is an unprecedented and rapid expansion of the publishing industry during the Romantic period—an expansion which was itself the result of a host of interrelated factors: recently improved roadways, the subsequent increase of volume in newspaper sales (by 1796 London alone was distributing 8.6 million copies of newspapers per year, nearly three times the number distributed in 1782), and the subsequent increase in specialized advertising by publishers and booksellers in newspapers; the emergence of reading as a socially-fashionable activity, the development of a precise “publishing season,” and a general increase in middle-class disposable income—to name just a few. All these factors led to increased readership, increased profits, and increased efforts by publishers and booksellers to sell even more, to make even more money. Their efforts did not go unrewarded.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the publishing industry was fully engaged in what James Raven has called a “new commercial attack.”<sup>21</sup> This consisted in the development of literary agents—specialists who represented authors to publishers—and publishers’ readers, who would speculate on the market value of literary manuscripts. Through this newly created circuit between business interests and literary production, publishers began explicitly to employ authors to write about certain subjects, in certain genres (poetry or prose, romance or novel), and at certain lengths.<sup>22</sup> As St. Clair says, “most authors were obliged to operate within a commercial system in which they, their advisers, and their publishers attempted to judge what the market wanted and how best to supply it.”<sup>23</sup> Obviously there were a wide range of publishers, from mainstream to radical, and it would be too simple to say that during the Romantic period publishers imposed their business vision onto and thereby totally controlled the creative processes of the

literary producers whose works they sold. Authors could, to a certain extent, pick the publishers most suited to their styles or political views.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, we know that most manuscripts submitted to publishers were not accepted (including the first two cantos of Byron's *Childe Harold*, which was rejected by Longman and Constable). And, in general, we know that big publishing firms with ambitions to reach large numbers of readers tended to err on the side of caution in their publications.<sup>25</sup> Publishers and authors alike, therefore, had an incentive to publish or create works that resembled the works that sold the best. Another way of saying this would be to elaborate St. Clair's "multiplier" in a slightly different way: the more successful any given work, the more literary influence it generated.

Since St. Clair is interested in the effects that reading in the Romantic era had on the "mentalities" of the reading nation, and not the formal legacy left by the period's most influential authors, his approach is consistently hands-off when it comes to performing close readings.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, St. Clair is critical of attempts to "recover the effects on readers by ever more careful study of the texts being read," because "that is attempting to find the outputs of the system from the inputs."<sup>27</sup> He does, however, note the most obvious evidence of the literary influence of popularity: imitations. The more popular a style, the more likely it was to be imitated, and, when done well, these imitations were commercially successful as well. After Scott began using the word "romance" to describe his own poetry, for example, that term began to appear on a much more regular basis in Romantic-era literary production. Moreover, literary agents began specifically advising their clients to write narrative verse in the style of Scott.<sup>28</sup>

While St. Clair's focus on the examples of obvious imitations is well taken, I think that there is great potential for a study of commercial influence that looks in places that have gone relatively unnoticed. What would the effects of popularity be on the creative processes of authors who were genuinely innovative in their own right? There is of course nothing essential about the appeal of commercial success, but for authors who wished to receive both financial and social acclaim, the business of books was bound to exert its influence in both obvious and subtle ways. This is not an argument about imitation so much as it is about how an interest in commercial success affects an author's creative decisions.

Thus, one measure of the importance of Scott's poetry, given the evidence that its success changed not only the business practices of the publishing industry but also the reading practices of its customers,<sup>29</sup> is the psychological impact that his works had on one particularly important segment of the reading nation: other authors. Jane Austen, for example, confessed her jealousy of Scott in a letter to her niece, writing that

Walter Scott has no business to write novels, especially good ones.—It is not fair.—He has Fame and Profit enough as a Poet, and should not be taking the bread out of other people's mouths.—I do not like him, & do not mean to like *Waverley* if I can help it—but I fear I must.<sup>30</sup>

The immediate context for Austen's comment is the publication (two months prior) of Scott's first novel—but contained within her worry about his potential as a novelist is an acknowledgment that this poetry has already had an important effect on her. That effect is measurable in two ways: first, because her assumption about the probable quality of Scott's novel must depend on her opinion of his skill as a poet (she would have nothing



else to base her expectations upon—the letter makes clear she hasn’t yet read his novel), and second, because she acknowledges that one important index of the quality of Scott’s poetry is the “Fame and Profit” that it has brought him. The positions of fame and profit are separable, but, as Austen acknowledges, the two are becoming more and more intertwined in the business of writing during the Romantic period. She may not “like him,” but she clearly understands that Scott, in his career as a poet, has achieved something that she wishes to achieve for herself.

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A study that seeks to provide a complete genealogy of the inter-generic influence of Scott’s poetry would have to trace two separate paths. The first, and in some ways more obvious, is the indirect path. The indirect path of Scott’s poetic influence would look like this: Scott’s novels were an important influence on the development of the novel; Scott’s approach to poetry was an important influence on his own approach to writing the novel; therefore, Scott’s poetry was indirectly an important influence on the development of the novel. Or:

Scott’s Poetry → The Waverley Novels → The Novel (after Scott)

The direct path of Scott’s poetic influence would look like this: novelists of the Romantic era read and were inspired by/jealous of Scott’s poetry; consciously or unconsciously, the pro-Scott business agenda of the publishing industry affected all literary producers, hack and genius alike; because the novelists of the Romantic era were both fans of Scott’s

poetry and aware of the business environment in which they were attempting to publish, Scott's poetry directly influenced the continuing rise of the novel in the Romantic period.

Or:

Scott's Poetry → Novelists (as fans / as sellers) → The Novel (after Scott)

In fact, I suspect that Scott's generic lineage follows both the indirect and direct paths, but, for better or worse, my arguments in Chapters One through Four will primarily aim to establish the direct path. His work as a poet, as well as his work as a novelist, was admired and, even in the instances where critical opinion turned against him (as it did at times during his career as a poet), he continued to be read voraciously. I think the most plausible hypothesis concerning Scott, therefore, is one that acknowledges the extent to which his influence manifested itself both as a result of his practice as a poet and a novelist, and as a result of his success in the literary marketplace (a symptom of, but separable from, the pleasure his works provided his readers). Furthermore, as both of my models above imply, I think the most plausible hypothesis concerning the nature of Scott's influence is one that does not assume that he influenced the novel only as a novelist, and poetry only as a poet—that is, I hypothesize that literary influence is transportable between genres.

Nonetheless, both models (or the composite of the two) are at best schematic approximations—they merely serve as a clarifying point of departure for attempting to untangle the complex transmission of actual literary influence as it occurred in the Romantic period. In Chapter One, I offer a theoretical framework for tracking formal

innovation as it is passed between genres. To date, this history of literary form has not received much attention, and much of the work that is available on this subject is limited by its over-reliance on assumptions about the essential features of poetry and the novel—assumptions that themselves originate in the Romantic period. For example, poetry is often assumed to be vitally imaginative, abstract, or sentimental, while the novel is assumed to be socially expansive and (specifically as opposed to poetry) formally promiscuous. I argue that this understanding of what poetry can be, or what its trace might look like in the novel, is unnecessarily restricted. It also ends up obscuring what I think the true work of inter-generic research ought to be—that is, by evaluating one genre according to what is perceived to be another genre’s strength, we end up not with the kind of evidence that a theory of generic interrelation would seek to explain, but rather a view of one genre from the tendentious view of another (perhaps rival) genre.

I argue that the difficulty we seem to have in perceiving generic interrelation in its most basic and powerful form—that is, in understanding the way in which formal developments in one genre affect, enable, or constrain the trajectory of formal developments in another genre—is in part a function of the kind of distinctions that genre concepts encourage us to make more generally. As Michael McKeon has shown, what we now readily identify as “the novel” was once not recognized as a genre at all, but instead was received as an indistinct amalgamation of various generic elements; and then, in the middle of the eighteenth century, it was no longer felt to be various at all—it was perceived as its own coherent genre. Thus, the history of the emergence of the novel is, in part, a history of perceptions about generic interrelation: the point at which a genre “emerges” is also the point at which its relation to other genres becomes less apparent. Or,

as McKeon says, genres are defined by their “capacity to change without changing into something else.”<sup>31</sup>

In addition to the difficulties raised by the emergence of the novel as a genre concept, there appear also to be a variety of social and cultural factors that cause us to perceive generic separation as more rigid and unyielding than it actually is. These include our tendency to hierarchize generic relations according to perceptions of relative cultural authority, as well as the effects of idealizing, but ultimately misleading, theories of what poetry is and how it works. Particularly because the primary movers of literary development in the Romantic period were themselves also important literary theorists, it subsequently became increasingly difficult to see beyond the significant insights of the Romantics themselves, or to feel the need to think about the extent to which their formal innovations depart from or exceed their explanations of how genres might interact.

But I argue that there is a way to circumvent these perceptual difficulties—namely by reading for the migration of elements of narrative form as they pass between compatible generic environments. I borrow from and revise the genre-theoretical work of Ralph Rader as a way of determining a methodology for this kind of reading. Specifically, I follow Rader in attempting to identify the basic formal feature of a text that engages our cognitive abilities—which projects an objective, imaginative relationship between reader, narrator, and character—and then in tracking its movements as it is passed between narrative genres. Rader’s formal interests are particularly well-suited for a study of some of the Romantic era’s most pressing questions about narrative form. It has long been a acknowledged, for example, that one of the signature effects of the Romantic-era ballad revival is the way in which it caused poets to develop narrative form in their own poetry

as a way of thinking about and representing the differences between oral and print-based forms of poetic transmission. Employing a modified version of Rader's formal methodology allows us to join the Romantics in focusing on the distinctive properties of narrators, and to use this focus as a foundation for a new study of generic interrelation. We are able, therefore, to reformulate the question of the relation between poetry and the novel as a question about the form of the narrators that transmit and represent their stories.

Ultimately, a study of generic interrelation should not only provide practical tools for tracking generic elements as they traverse the channels of influence that connect compatible formal environments with each other, but also to explain the formal and extra-formal conditions that make that kind of generic influence more or less likely. Thus, while the overall the argument of Part One is focused on the Romantic period in general, and the novelistic posterity of Scott's poetry in particular, the theoretical claims of Chapter One are pitched a bit more broadly. That is, in focusing on some of the basic features of genre, literary history, and the sources of literary innovation, I hope not only to work towards an historicized account of formal development in the Romantic period, but also to think about how such an account could be put to use in other literary-historical projects. This is not to say that I intend or expect to be able to offer a total view of the complex movements of this system; but rather, that in tracing the signature effects of Scott's influence, and in giving a broad sense of how the power of his example helped to organize the rest of the literary field in the Romantic period, we may, in the process, be able to come closer to understanding not only the nature of cross-generic influence, but also the key role that the poetry of Walter Scott played in this under-explored area of literary history.

Chapters Two and Three take up Scott's first three narrative poems—*The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), *Marmion* (1806), and *The Lady of the Lake* (1810). While each of these poems, particularly the *Lay* and *Marmion*, contain significant formal innovations that deserve to be considered on their own, it is also possible—by examining Scott's first three poems in relation to each other—to discern a developmental arc that simultaneously reflects Scott's rise in poetic fame and his gradual loss of interest in the formal and historical problems that animate his earliest approaches to poetic storytelling. My argument focuses on how Scott's scholarly interest in what he calls the “melting and dissolving” of Scotland's “peculiar features”—traditions, superstitions, and so on—into those of England, finds a formal analogue in his narrative poems.<sup>32</sup> I claim that Scott enriches narrator-space—a narratological category that structures the relations and tensions among multiple narrating voices in a single work—to examine the changes that make up media history. While Romantic-era media theory tends to be criticized for the way it produces, as Paula McDowell has noted, a “confrontational model of print and oral tradition,” I argue that Scott uses narrative form in his poetry to produce a much more complex account of media-historical change than we might otherwise expect.<sup>33</sup>

Specifically, I claim that for Scott, media history is intertwined with literary history, and the changes that make up these interrelated histories are best analyzed, as it were, from within the perspective of poetic narration itself. This narratological question—who are the speakers of poetry in print and what is their relation to the speakers of oral poetry?—allows Scott to examine the *process* by which oral poetics faded in importance while printed poetics achieved its modern dominance. I argue that the most innovative feature of Scott's enrichment of narrator-space consists in the way that he uses it to analyze not

only what is lost (embodiment, cultural embeddedness) but also what is gained (freedom from human vulnerability) in the mutually-implicated histories of media change and narrative form. These innovations, which invest a variety of narrator positions and character positions with practical density—particularly as they relate to each other—prove, I argue, to be influential in the continuing development of the novel during the Romantic period.

In Chapter Four, the last in the arc that makes up Part One of the dissertation, I challenge the conventional view of the development of the early novel which sees the intrusive narrative style of the eighteenth-century being supplanted by the impersonal narrative style of the realist novel in the nineteenth-century. Instead, I argue that these two narrative modes are actually part of a longer and unbroken history of intrusive narration—a developmental arc whose shape can only be described by a history of generic interrelation—and, ultimately, that the realist novel’s impersonal narrator has a significant pre-history in the tradition of narrative poetry. I begin by showing how Scott inherits and innovates upon Henry Fielding’s intrusive narrative style in his enrichment of narrator-space, and how Austen, in turn, inherits and innovates upon Scott’s formal apparatus as she develops her own distinctive form of narration. Moreover, I attempt to show that it is only in Scott’s *poetry*, and specifically not his *novels*, that we find the formal interactions between narrator and character that that continue to structure approaches to narrative form in the practice of realism. I identify a particularly vivid example of Scott’s influence on Austen in the first volume of *Mansfield Park* (1814), where that novel’s main character, Fanny Price, is depicted as wanting to avoid the kind of social attention, and psychological priority, that tends to be granted to protagonists in

novels. Throughout the first volume, the narrator, in apparent sympathy with Fanny, repeatedly intrudes to filter Fanny's thoughts and words through the asocial and impersonal perspective of the narrator herself. The effect, therefore, is to suggest both an intimacy and an absolute separation between character and narrator, between personality and impersonality. This signature aspect of Austen's style—where the formal is brought to bear on the social, and where asociality is associated with silence or obscurity—is clearly presaged by Scott's enrichment of narrator-space in his poetry.

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My broad interest in Part One is to establish the importance of, and develop the tools for identifying, the *formal* relationship between poetry and the novel. This project follows in a mode of thinking which acknowledges, in the words of Jonathan Culler, “that people might be wrong about [genres], unaware of affinities or ignoring continuities in favor of more striking novelties, or recognizing an attenuated version of a larger tradition.”<sup>34</sup> But in Part Two, I shift focus to show how the history of the experience of reading in both the poetry and the novel confirms their essential interrelation *as concepts*. Thus, rather than establishing a relationship between the formal machinery of poetry and the novel, I seek to show how they have become formed into a binary in our conceptual understanding, and how this binary is held together by stronger, or at least much longer lasting, forces than those that might establish relations among other genres. The novel-poetry binary is still with us today, a conceptual inheritance from the Romantic period that has worked its way into the very structure of our thought. To that end, in Chapter Five I pursue the following historical and conceptual claims: first, that the novel and



poetry have always, since the inception of the novel itself, been bound to each other; second, that this binding is reflected both at the level of the experience of reading and within theorization of the categories of “the novel” and “poetry”; and third, that the territories claimed by each component in this binary generic system have been gradually shifting since the Romantic period, and that the effects of this are demonstrable both within theories of poetry and the novel and in reported experiences of reading them.

The central organizational focus, and puzzle, of the chapter is the history of the experience of reading Lord Byron’s *Don Juan*. The history of *Don Juan* criticism in the twentieth century is marked by a consistent tendency to read the poem as if it were a novel in verse. But, while there is some precedent in the nineteenth century for describing Byron’s masterpiece as a “poetical novel,” the much more typical response—both among the poem’s champions and its detractors—was to describe it negatively: as a piece of writing that is specifically *not* poetry. Through an extensive engagement with the history of recorded responses to, and experiences of, reading *Don Juan*, I provide a chronological taxonomy of the many, sometimes overlapping, forms in which this logic of denial has been articulated, and then trace how responses to this non-poetic poem gradually transform, particularly when they latch onto and find expression through twentieth-century theories of the novel. The surprising reception history of *Don Juan*, I argue, is reflective of much broader changes in the concepts and perceptions of genre since the Romantic period. Indeed, *Don Juan* is not simply a symptom of this broader history, but also, because of the way it has focused many of the discourses about poetry and the novel since the Romantic period, was instrumental in bringing about this new conceptual order.

The typical way of explaining a work whose reception undergoes significant changes long after its original publication is by reference to the history and development of aesthetic norms. Thus, in the words of Hans Robert Jauss “there are works that at the moment of their appearance are not yet directed at any specific audience, but that break through the familiar horizon of literary expectations so completely that an audience can only gradually develop for them.”<sup>35</sup> On this account, some works must wait for the proper audience or principle of taste to be properly appreciated for what is already inherent in them. My interest, however, is less in the asynchrony between works and their complementary principles of taste, but rather in the distinct question of the relation between the experience of reading and the procedure of comprehending that experience according to available genre categories. And, as I hope to show in this chapter, what *feels* like a poem or a novel has undergone a significant change in the last two hundred years. Thus, *Don Juan* was once perceived as a poem that is not at all poetical, and now it is perceived as a novel. Understanding this history will require more than acknowledging that principles of taste change or that genres change throughout their history<sup>36</sup>—for, we must also consider why and how a poem could become a novel without changing a word of its content, without in any way altering its identifiably poetic features of rhyme, lineation, and meter.

Because both the materials and the questions I ask of them are different in Part Two, I turn to a different set of methodological principles. In this regard, I rely primarily on a version of Jamesonian “metacommentary,” “according to which our object of study is less the text itself than the interpretations through which we attempt to confront and to appropriate it,” though with less of a focus on the historical sedimentation and layering of

interpretation than an attention to what Jacques Rancière has identified as “the distribution of the sensible,” or “the system of *a priori* forms determining what presents itself to sense experience” in both politics and aesthetics.<sup>37</sup> As perceptions of what “poetry” and “the novel” are change—on their own and in relation to each other—the nature of the object under analysis changes as well. This results, in the particular case of *Don Juan*’s reception history, in a totally unexpected development in generic perception, but, in general, ultimately confirms that poetry and the novel have become part of an inseparable binary.

Finally, I focus on theories of the novel—primarily in the eighteenth century immediately before and after its prominent emergence—and Romantic-era theories of the essentially poetic, to excavate a broad but unspoken consensus among a variety of otherwise very different thinkers that poetry and the novel both rely on, while being essentially distinct, from each other. Our intellectual ancestors not only experienced the reading of poetry and the novel in ways that were occasionally, perplexingly, similar, but also, more importantly, have felt continuously compelled to speak of the precise terms which can establish their distinction. Through constant use since the eighteenth century, the novel-poetry binary has formed itself into a basic feature of both our experiences and theories of reading and writing poetry and the novel. Thus, poetry and the novel are constantly brought into contact with each other—either as a way of establishing their essential distinction or similarity—and this is both a cause, and a symptom, of their special relationship in literary history.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Form and Generic Interrelation in the Romantic Period

#### I. Poetry in the Unnecessarily Restricted Sense

Language, colour, form, and religious and civil habits of action are all the instruments and materials of poetry; they may be called poetry by that figure of speech which considers the effects as a synonyme of the cause. But poetry in a more restricted sense expresses those arrangements of language, and especially metrical language which are created by that imperial faculty, whose throne is curtained within the invisible nature of man. And this springs from the nature itself of language, which is a more direct representation of the actions and passions of our internal being, and is susceptible of more various and delicate combinations, than colour, form or motion, and is more plastic and obedient to the control of that faculty of which it is the creation.

--Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*<sup>38</sup>

The received sense of the Romantic canon is somewhat at odds with the received sense of the rise and gradual dominance of the novel over the course of its long history. The Romantic period, especially in the latter half of the twentieth century, became associated with, and most notable for, its apparently unrivalled genius in the field of poetry and poetics. Thus, insofar as the Romantic period has any representation in the popular imagination, it is generally understood to be an age of great poetry, where “the

spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” characterizes the most significant literary works.<sup>39</sup> And yet the novel, a genre that tends to be celebrated for its realism—that is to say, its disavowal of the abstract and the imaginative in favor of the probable or observed realities—was in the midst of its meteoric rise during the Romantic period. Despite being a period of literary history that contains extraordinary innovations both in poetry and the novel—and when popular readership of both genres was at an all-time high—the relationship between poetry and the novel during the Romantic period is seldom the object of direct inquiry.

Indeed, while contemporary literary historians have occasionally attempted to make sense of the complex and interrelated formal development of poetry and the novel, their projects have often employed categories of comparison that originate in, or at least borrow heavily from, tendentious Romantic-era discourses about the relationship between poetry and the novel that inherently favor one genre at the explicit or implicit expense of the other. Thus, as I began to indicate in the introduction, Karl Kroeber’s *Romantic Narrative Art* thinks that this relationship is defined primarily by the way in which the novel was able to overcome shortcomings inherent in the form of narrative poetry. It was, in Kroeber’s view, a matter of realizing that the expansive social focus of the novel is better equipped to represent what many of the Romantics began to explore in their narrative poetry, namely the complex and fluid relation of an individual to his or her society:

We have tried to suggest some of the ways in which Scott’s long narrative poems point towards his novels, how, in particular, the deficiencies of these poems reveal an inherent novelistic bias. . . . We have suggested that

much narrative poetry of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is to be understood as a contribution to the enlarging and enriching of realistic fiction which reached so impressive a culmination in the Victorian novel. However much poets like Crabbe, Hunt, Hood, and Byron may have participated in that development, it was Scott who articulated the new novel, who gave novelistic shape to many of those forces which urged writers of his day towards narrative expression.<sup>40</sup>

Throughout the book, Kroeber repeatedly speaks of the natural “progress” or “advance” from narrative poetry to the novel, thus setting up a historical model whereby an inferior literary form inevitably develops into or realizes itself within a superior literary form.<sup>41</sup> Since his book is primarily focused on poetry, he does not offer a detailed account of how the narrative poetry of the Romantic period helped to “enlarg[e] and enrich” the novel, but in general it would appear that he thinks this influence derives primarily from the Romantics coming upon and popularizing a kind of “narrative subject-matter” that would later be taken up by novelists.<sup>42</sup> Thus, for Kroeber, Romantic narrative poets enabled the development of the novel by beginning a project of narrative representation that they were never able to complete in poetry. The “spaciousness” and “relaxed rational structure of prose” in the novel allows writers to satisfy the desire for a detailed representation of the individual in relation to society in a way that the “speed and compression of poetry” made all but impossible.<sup>43</sup>

Marshall Brown’s more recent response to Kroeber’s obvious bias towards the Victorian novel is useful for identifying what has and hasn’t changed—since the 1960s, and since the nineteenth century—in the way we discuss the relation between Romantic-

era poetry and the novel. Arguing against the view that the narrative poetry of the romantic era finds its “fulfillment” in the “prose complexity” of the Victorian novel, Brown claims instead that “the eventual subordination of poetry is to be understood as sacrifice, not enrichment.”<sup>44</sup> That’s because, for Brown, poetry’s “essential quality” is its “impalpable transcendence,” and he likens the relation between the novel and poetry to the difference between “surface and depth.”<sup>45</sup> Drawing on a variety of Romantic-era novels, many of which feature lyrics inserted into and surrounded by the prose of the novel, Brown claims that poems in these novels “constitute a world beyond the interactions of the characters and the ordinary causal order of empirical existence.”<sup>46</sup> That is to say, they “must be seen as the fulfillment, not the displacement of the prose world,” an aspect of the Romantic novel that will later be subordinated by “the formal unconscious of the realist novel.”<sup>47</sup>

While Kroeber and Brown have clearly opposed views of the relation between poetry and the novel during the Romantic period, they are, at another level, in agreement about the methodology for determining this relation. Both thinkers value what they take to be an essential advantage of one genre—the social expansiveness of the novel for Kroeber, the “impalpable transcendence” of poetry for Brown—and evaluate the other genre by that standard. This shared logic is not original to these twentieth- and twenty-first century thinkers, but can be traced to the Romantic period itself, when poets and novelists were also attempting to work out the relation of poetry to the novel. William Wordsworth, for example, in his preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, first identifies a deep similarity between the two, only to move toward a distinction. He famously claims that

It would be a most easy task to prove . . . that not only the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose, but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poem will be found to be strictly the language of prose when prose is well written.<sup>48</sup>

Though Wordsworth asserts that “there neither is nor can be any essential difference” between poetry and prose, he continues, eventually arguing that poetry is to be preferred for the way poetic meter “temper[s]” the “overbalance of pleasure” that might otherwise painfully accompany notably passionate language in prose:

This may be illustrated by appealing to the Reader’s own experience of the reluctance with which he comes to the re-perusal of the distressful parts of *Clarissa Harlowe*, or *The Gamester*. While Shakespeare’s writings, in the most pathetic scenes, never act upon us as pathetic beyond the bounds of pleasure – an effect which is in a great degree to be ascribed to small, but continual and regular impulses of pleasurable surprise from the metrical arrangement.<sup>49</sup>

Both Kroeber and Brown, therefore, repeat the structure of Wordsworth’s theory of poetry—each implies that there is an essential quality about poetry that the novel itself cannot accommodate. Kroeber turns Wordsworth’s argument about the calming influence of meter into a critique of the “speed and compression” of poetry, while Brown, taking Wordsworth’s argument one step further, claims that prose and novels can only be “fulfilled” when in direct contact with poetry that appears recognizably in measured,



lineated stanzas. This kind of argument, which first manifested in the Romantic period and has remained largely unchanged since, avoids addressing the question of how genres develop in conjunction with each other by instead insisting on their essential differences.<sup>50</sup>

What I'd like to begin to do in this chapter, then, is to think about how a new theory of generic interrelation might take into account some of the less-noticed formal relationships that bound poetry and the novel during the Romantic period. I describe this approach as new because, rather than focusing on *lyric* poetry and its importance to the poetic situation during this time, I will instead focus on how the popularity and inventiveness of *narrative* poetry was a primary agent in the dialectic of generic interrelation; and rather than thinking of the novel as a superior or inevitable form of narrative poetry, I attempt to think of their relation in less value-laden terms. It will be my argument that there is an extensive and under-examined literary- and formal-historical relation between the novel and narrative poetry, both of which can be thought of as contributing to and partaking of a shared history of narrative form. The highly fungible elements of narrative structure and form—what Gerard Genette refers to as “the event that consists of someone recounting something: the act of narrating taken in itself”—is one of the most important similarities between the novel and poetry at this time, and serves as a broad site of contact between them.<sup>51</sup>

This is not to say that the features of poetry that have continued to determine our understanding of the relation between poetry and the novel are irrelevant—indeed, the fate of vitally imaginative or sentimental language in the rise of realism is obviously an important part of this relationship. Nonetheless, we are still left in a somewhat

unsatisfying position if we don't attempt to think beyond the category of lyrical or affect-based relations and lines of influence. Consider, for example, that despite the fact that lyric poetry is typically associated with an enrichment of the position of the poet-speaker, lyrical forms of representation in the novel are typically thought to apply to character and the kinds of experiences or relationships that develop around character or groups of characters.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, one typical way of analyzing lyric poetry is in terms of the extent to which its lyric speaker establishes or fails to establish a relationship with the world.<sup>53</sup> Thus, in the kinds of critical discussions I am here diagnosing, what originates in poetry and migrates to the novel is primarily thought of in terms of its effects on strategies for representing relationships among characters and other characters, or characters and their world. This, however, begs the question about what the trace of poetry's influence might look like in the novel, and artificially limits the scope of the investigation.

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Before turning to the broader discussion of the histories of genre and form that will serve as a theoretical anchor for my account of how Scott's poetry affected the development of the novel, I'd like to conclude this section by looking at *Waverley*, Scott's first published novel, to help clarify the limitations of lyric- and affect-based approaches to the relation of poetry and the novel. I'll have more to say about this novel in Chapter Four, when I've developed the terms of my argument at greater length, but for now I will merely try to enter the debate by looking at how the limited category of inserted poems function in the novel. Like many Romantic novels, *Waverley* is peppered with a number of complete and excerpted poems that appear recognizably as poems—that

is, in measured, lineated stanzas that are visually and functionally different from the prose of the novel that surrounds them. But, whereas the criticism stresses the poetry's usefulness in exploring deep subjectivity or representing powerful emotion, the function of poetry in *Waverley* is more various. This is not, however, to say that *Waverley* entirely defies the categories that are currently available in the criticism. For example, Waverley, when pondering the state of his own heart and the possibility that his impending departure to join a dragoons regiment as a Captain will prevent the realization of his love for a young woman named Miss Cecilia Stubbs, composes a poem entitled "Mirkwood Mere." The "unworthy editor," who plainly does not think it very good, nonetheless includes it in its entirety, because the lines "will serve, at least, better than narrative of any kind, to acquaint [the reader] with the wild and irregular spirit of our hero."<sup>54</sup> In this case, the narrator appears to endorse the view that poetry, as opposed to "narrative of any kind," is better suited for expressing deep emotion. Indeed, one of the main themes of the novel is that Waverley's undisciplined poetic education has improperly prepared him for the harsh realities of social life—he is "warm in his feelings, wild and romantic in his ideas and in his taste of reading, with a strong disposition towards poetry" (*W*, 108)—thus appearing to contribute to the very subordination of poetry that Mary Favret has argued was a common feature of novels during the Romantic period.<sup>55</sup>

But, while Scott's explicit comments about poetry in *Waverley* seem to fit in with much of what has rightly interested critics who have explored the poetry-novel dynamic during the Romantic period, the way in which Scott *uses* poetry in *Waverley* is, as Shelley once said of "poetry in a more restricted sense," perhaps "more various and delicate" than we might otherwise expect. Poetic allusions, for example, appear dozens of

times throughout the novel to illuminate a scene, clarify a situation, or explain an aspect of a character that has not yet been fully explained—in a way that does not appear to be essentially distinct from the function of prose in the novel. So—to choose just one typical example—at the banquet that the Baron of Bradwardine hosts to welcome Waverley to his Scottish estate of Tully-Veolan, one of the guests, a Mr. Rubrick, is described in the following terms:

The non-juring clergyman was a pensive and interesting old man, with much the air of a sufferer for conscience' sake. He was one of those

Who, undeprived, their benefice forsook.

For this whim, when the Baron was out of hearing, the Bailie used sometimes gently to rally Mr Rubrick, upbraiding him with the niceties of his scruples. (*W*, 91-2)

Inserted poetic excerpts such as this one, which sometimes occur in the minds of characters but more often in the commentary of the narrator, function variously as minor but frequent uses of poetry where the poetry does more than simply complement or decorate the prose of the novel—it often provides the essential explanatory detail and even completes a prose sentence. Thus, it would be incorrect to think that the critique of Waverley's temperament and education stands for the role of poetry within the realistic values of the novel: Scott's use of poetry within his novel is more capacious than the terms in which he explicitly theorizes it in the novel.

More interestingly, Scott occasionally pits a particular concept of poetry against the printed prose of the novel to produce a fairly sophisticated analysis of the relation between form, medium, and experience. As I'll explore in much greater detail in Chapters Two and Three, Scott's lifelong interest in the effects of the rise of print on the practice of live minstrelsy and poetic storytelling derives from his early years as a collector and editor of ballads, and serves as a powerful inspiration for his most influential formal innovations. He began to explore the complex formal implications of this media-historical change first in his career as a poet—by developing a narrative voice that not only self-consciously preserves the trace of minstrelsy's disappearance, but that also analyzes the effects of that disappearance on the practice of storytelling—and it continued to affect his approach to print narrative in his career as a novelist. For now, I can only gesture towards the importance that this set of interrelated media-historical, literary-historical, and formal-historical questions played in Scott's literary career. For my present purposes, however, it will be sufficient to show how Scott's interest in the relation of past (oral) forms of storytelling to present (print-based) forms of storytelling affects the way he uses inserted poems in *Waverley*.

Early on in *Waverley*'s stay at Tully-Veolan, the Baron's daughter (and *Waverley*'s eventual wife), Rose Bradwardine, is called on to sing an old Scottish song. The narrator informs us that it was originally

interwoven by some village poet,

Who, noteless as the race from which he sprung,

Saved others' names, but left his own unsung.

Out of apparent respect for the trace of ancient culture which Rose's song possesses, the narrator insists on drawing attention to just how mediated the reader's access is to the gorgeous music:

The sweetness of her voice, and the simple beauty of her music, gave all the advantage which the minstrel could have desired, and which his poetry so much wanted. I almost doubt if it can be read with patience, destitute of these advantages; although I conjecture the following copy to have been somewhat corrected by Waverley, to suit those who might not relish pure antiquity. (*W*, 112)

What follows this narratorial interruption is a transcription—marked as written, “somewhat corrected”—of a lineated poem entitled “St Swithin's Chair” (the title appears centered over its evenly arranged quatrains). Scott is not content to let the reader give in to his willing suspension of disbelief, but instead makes an extra effort to cause the printed representation of a song appear and feel as if it is a printed representation of a printed poem. We are temporarily pulled out of the diegetic world occupied by the characters, and made to observe from the extra-diegetic space occupied by the narrator—which, by analogy, would be somewhat like trying to watch a baseball game by following a live report of it made in Morse code. We are made to feel the loss of live access to the singing of the song, distinctly, as loss.

Later in the novel, when Waverley meets Flora Mac-Ivor, the woman with whom he is in desperate love for the majority of the novel, Scott again shows his disposition to mark the world of poetry as somehow distinct from the world of novelistic representation that imperfectly contains it. In a chapter entitled “Highland Minstrelsy,” Flora requests

that Waverley follow her to a picturesque forest glen, replete with a “romantic waterfall,” some dramatic and broken rocks, and intimations of a “very dark abyss” out of which the water flows (*W*, 176). Here, Flora means to sing an old Highland song to Waverley, and she doesn’t think that it could be appropriately received in a less dramatic setting:

‘I have given you the trouble of walking to this spot, Captain Waverley, both because I thought the scenery would interest you, and because a Highland song would suffer still more from my imperfect translation, were I to introduce it without its own wild and appropriate accompaniments. To speak in the poetical language of my country, the seat of the Celtic muse is in the mist of the secret and solitary hill, and her voice in the murmur of the mountain stream.’ (*W*, 177)

Scott, apparently, agrees with Flora’s assessment, and, though he once again represents the song in lineated stanzas, neatly arranged in quatrains beneath its centered title, “Battle Song,” he makes it clear that the reader’s experience of reading on the page is essentially different from and inferior to what Waverley experiences in the presence of Flora’s live voice:

Flora had exchanged the measured and monotonous recitative of the bard for a lofty and uncommon Highland air, which had been a battle-song in former ages. A few irregular strains introduced a prelude of a wild and peculiar tone, which harmonized well with the distant waterfall, and the soft sigh of the evening breeze in the rustling leaves of an aspen which overhung the seat of the fair harpress. The following verses convey but

little idea of the feelings with which, so sung and accompanied, they were heard by Waverley. (*W*, 178)

Poetry in this novel, then, amounts to much more than its insertion into a prose narrative might otherwise seem to suggest. If anything, its presence in *Waverley* is most notable for the way it is marked as being an incomplete, or severely depleted, version of itself. Poetry in its most robust sense, Scott's narrator seems to be implying, requires not only the presence of a live voice to convey it to a live audience, but, as the scene with Flora implies, the kinds of cultural, geographical, and even temporal embeddedness which the medium of print cannot recreate.

But, Scott's sensitivity to the differences between live poetry and print mediation does not lead him simply to valorize the lost vitality of the cultural forms of the ancient past. Rather, Scott attempts to develop formal accommodation for the absence of orality, and to use that formal accommodation to dramatize the difference such an absence makes for the craft of storytelling. He historicizes the form his narratives take as a way of, at the very least, maintaining a trace of the absence of orality so as to make that absence integral to the structure of the narrative itself. We see his consciousness about the limits of print-mediated narrative in the examples from *Waverley* that I've provided here, but as I'll argue in Chapters Two and Three, Scott's most significant, influential, and largely unrecognized innovations of narrative form in this regard are to be found in his poems, as well as in the novels and novelists that are a part of his poetic lineage. The work of Scott, I suggest, helps us to reformulate the question of the relation between poetry and the novel as a question of the relation between the kinds of narrators that appear in their various formal and medial environments—that is, as the relation between live storytelling



and print-mediated (poetic or novelistic) storytelling. The question, therefore, of the relation of printed poetry to the printed novel in the Romantic period becomes much more meaningful when it is routed through the logically prior question of the forms of narration that underwrite them.

## **II. Towards a Theory of Generic Interrelation, Part I: Genre, Medium, and Imaginative Structures**

In 1986, Ralph Cohen published an essay that he hoped would function as a “contribution to the regeneration of genre theory.”<sup>56</sup> Such a task, he acknowledged, was so difficult in part because of the unruly variety of ways in which genre has been understood by genre theorists:

Genre has been defined in terms of meter, inner form, intrinsic form, radical of presentation, single traits, family traits, institutions, conventions, contracts, and these have been considered either as universals or as empirical historical groupings.<sup>57</sup>

Cohen’s resolution of this problem was to offer a “process theory of genre,” which posits that

Genre concepts in theory and practice arise, change, and decline for historical reasons. And since each genre is composed of texts that accrue, the grouping is a process, not a determinate category. Genres are open categories. Each member alters the genre by adding, contradicting, or changing constituents, especially those of members most closely related to it.<sup>58</sup>

This decidedly “empirical” as opposed to “logical” approach to genre theory has proven to be influential in the study of genre, and will guide my thinking about generic interrelation throughout the dissertation.<sup>59</sup>

But, while Cohen understands his argument to imply that “genres do not exist by themselves,” and that they must “be understood in relation to other genres,” the formal interrelationships between the novel and poetry remain difficult to perceive.<sup>60</sup> One part of the problem, no doubt, is that a genre like the novel has long been understood to have “risen” from some relatively chaotic non-novelistic origin, but it has, since at least the middle of the eighteenth century, more or less stabilized into a coherent and settled genre. Thus, while J. Paul Hunter’s *Before Novels* and Michael McKeon’s *Origins of the English Novel* have each stressed the importance of understanding the multiple contexts of literature, culture, and literary culture that contributed to the formation of the novel *before* its emergence, literary historians have not felt as compelled to think about the interrelations and channels of influence to which the novel is subjected *after* its emergence from the primordial ooze of its origins.<sup>61</sup>

The difficulty of perceiving generic interrelation is, however, not simply a matter of critical oversight. McKeon, writing about how “the novel emerges into cultural consciousness,” highlights perhaps the knottiest part of the problem of generic interrelation—that is, the difficulty of specifying what it is that we perceive when we perceive generic distinctions.<sup>62</sup> In *The Origins of the English Novel*, he proposes a “dialectical method,” the promise of which is that it is capable of “grasp[ing] the novel in the process of assuming a historical existence, of changing from a multiplicity of other things (that is, of things which it is not) to a thing in itself, something that has the

capacity to change without changing into something else.” This method attempts to “make visible the historical moment when the generic coalescence of the novel can be seen both in its residual inseparability from other things and in its emergent coherence as a thing in itself.”<sup>63</sup> The genre of the novel, that is, was once felt not to be a genre at all, but instead to be an indistinct amalgamation of various generic elements; and then, at a precise historical moment, it was no longer felt to be various at all—it was perceived as its own coherent genre. To put it in slightly different terms: the history of the emergence of the novel is, in part, a history of perceptions about generic interrelation: the point at which a genre “emerges” is also the point at which its relation to other genres becomes less apparent.

McKeon argues that the novel’s formal emergence and its emergence in cultural consciousness are related, and, following Marx, he uses the figure of the “simple abstraction” to explain this relationship. A simple abstraction is “a deceptively monolithic category that encloses a complex historical process.”<sup>64</sup> We use the simple abstraction (or genre term) “novel” to refer, in fact, to a wide variety of objects—ranging from first-person accounts of criminal pseudo-autobiography to elaborate third-person accounts of the relations among members of a community—without feeling as if we need to be more specific in our terminology. This is because, by the middle of the eighteenth century, usage of the term “novel” had “become sufficiently complex to permit a generalizing ‘indifference’ to the specificity of its usages and an abstraction of the category whose integrity is presupposed by that indifference.”<sup>65</sup> McKeon’s account is useful here because it highlights one index of the conceptual strength of the simple abstraction, the measure of its “capacity to change without changing into something else,” and the way that

conceptual strength will make it increasingly difficult to perceive the extent to which it continues to borrow from and be influenced by the “things which it is not.” The difficulty of perceiving generic interrelation would therefore appear to be a function of the kind of concept that a genre is to begin with—that is, the simple abstraction that we use to designate the novel is itself both a cause and a symptom of that perceptual difficulty.

But, as I began to indicate in the previous section, our own models of cross-generic criticism exacerbate this perceptual difficulty by their tendency to restrict themselves to terms that essentialize the differences between genres. Thus, for example, in his influential work, *The Dialogic Imagination*, Mikhail Bakhtin goes so far as to make the essential difference between “poetry” and “the novel” a basic axiom upon which his whole argument about the novel’s sociality is based. (The interesting fact that he, and many others, claims the poetry of Byron as an example of a “novelized genre” will figure in Chapter Five.) In poetry, Bakhtin writes, “the unity of the language system and the unity (and uniqueness) of the poet’s individuality as reflected in his language and speech, which is directly realized in this unity, are indispensable prerequisites of poetic style.” The novel, on the other hand “not only does not require these conditions but . . . even makes the internal stratification of language, of its social heteroglossia and the variety of individual voices within it, the prerequisite for authentic novelistic prose.”<sup>66</sup> In other words, “the style of a novel is to be found in the combination of its styles; the language of the novel is the system of its ‘languages’,” whereas the style of poetry is to be found in its unitary language, in its resistance to the very generic openness displayed by the novel.<sup>67</sup> Thus, while Bakhtin seems to be suggesting that a text is a novel only to the extent that it freely borrows from and is influenced by the very things which it is not, in the same

formulation he claims that poetry will not and cannot be a part of the novel's heteroglossia. That's because a text is a poem, or a genre is poetic, only to the extent that it is impermeable to different voices—there can be no true interrelation between poetry and the novel.

The work of Bakhtin, with its emphasis on the openness of the novel, has arguably done as much to advance the question of generic interrelatedness as his emphasis on the inferiority of poetry has done to derail such a project. But, in addition to confirming a bias towards the essential separation of poetry and the novel that the “simple abstraction” of the novel implies, Bakhtin has also contributed to our tendency to hierarchize relations among genres, and thus to perceive separation along lines of cultural authority.<sup>68</sup> By insisting on analyzing genres *only* in terms of their differences, our practical understanding of the relation among genres is too easily subject to implicit and explicit forms of moralistic or philosophical valuation. Thus, the novel is socially gregarious and open-minded, or poetry is vitally imaginative and subjectively or emotionally penetrating. It is not necessary to dispute the occasional usefulness of these generic descriptions (if for no other reason than that they are accurate reflections of historically interesting attitudes about genre)—but it would be a mistake to think that they offer anything but a partial and tendentious view of genre; the view of one genre from the perspective of another.

The inability to see these tendentious views as tendentious is no doubt a typical byproduct of one genre's ascendance over another. But it is the *typicality* of genre hierarchization that is interesting to me, for it clarifies one particularly difficult challenge to cross-generic studies: that is, our awareness of generic interrelation appears to be

thwarted by the kinds of distinctions that genres encourage us to make in the first place. Attempting to see the relation among genres in a way that is not determined by our perception of abstract separation or hierarchical organization is a difficult task precisely because the need for such an investigation does not present itself to the mind with the same force or urgency that accompanies more easily recognized problems.

And yet, as I'll go on to explore next, there are indications that a variety of the Romantics were thinking about poetic form and medium in a way that is almost, without quite being, a conceptualization of generic interrelation as a function of narrative form. Needless to say, this kind of genre-theoretical conceptualization never emerged as a distinct topic of inquiry in its own right, and it remains, at best, tantalizingly latent. As Cohen once noted, "to attempt to connect literary history with theory of the period is to assume that theory and practice are synchronic. But works innovated in a period often have no theory to explain them. The theories that exist—whether mimetic or contemplative—are applicable to texts and genres previously written, not to innovations."<sup>69</sup> Stated more simply, we might identify this as the problem of uneven development of genre theory and practice. Thus, it remains possible that the practice of *writing in* a genre will have important implications for *theories of* genre, and the process of determining those implications may provide unexpected insights that would have otherwise gone unnoticed.

Indeed, to expand upon Cohen's notion that "works innovated in a period often have no theory to explain them," it is most useful to think of the theory/practice divide in the Romantic era not as one of cause and effect (where the theory is seen as what is responsible for, or somehow anterior to, what is practiced), but instead to think of

theoretical argumentation, and practical literary innovation, as being different instantiations of a nearly-identical impulse or aspiration towards an idea that has not yet been fully articulated or achieved. Both theory and practice are in the process of working something out—whether it be one idea or a set of gradually changing ideas. In short, the uneven development of genre theory and practice may help us to discern possibilities that remain latent—temporarily or permanently—throughout genre and genre-theoretical history; and these latent or possible ideas may in turn help us to understand important characteristics of Romantic-era thinking that would not have otherwise have been accessible. Thus, we can think of both genre theory and literary innovation as performing potentially sympathetic strains of thinking whose relation to each other provides a fuller picture of the complexities of the Romantic concerns with genre.<sup>70</sup>

**(i) Media Awareness as Narrative Theory, or Recovering the Latent Concepts of Generic Interrelation**

My attempt to excavate the latent concepts of generic interrelation begins in 1765, the year that Thomas Percy published his landmark ballad collection, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, sparking what we have come to recognize as a revival of interest in the ancient (specifically British) forms of ballad and romance.<sup>71</sup> During the fifty or so years after Percy's collection first appeared in bookstores, many other important ballad and romance collections were published, to great critical and popular acclaim. It was during this period, in the words of Stuart Curran, that "Great Britain recovered its national literature."<sup>72</sup> The effects of this new appetite for ancient poetic forms can be seen in the

poetry of Romantic poets, who began to borrow from and integrate aspects of the ancient poetry into their own works.

But, because the revival of ancient poetry was quite new, and the widespread exposure to its forms did not therefore have an accompanying accumulation of critical and theoretical commonplaces about it, the Romantic poets whose works began to bear the marks of ancient poetry's influence incorporated this influence in ways that were by necessity unique to the individual poet's individual relation to the ancient poetry—it also, not incidentally, caused the poets to be more self-reflexive about their own relation to the traditions they invoked.<sup>73</sup> Thus, as poets began to experiment with ancient forms, they were also, simultaneously, attempting to theorize the nature of their relationship to those ancient forms. This meta-awareness of poetic practice came to have a direct effect on the innovations of Romantic poets, and this can be seen to take a particularly influential form in the “romances” of Scott and Byron. They both regularly structured their poems as frame narratives, where “generally that frame is both more contemporary than the contents of the poem itself, enforcing multiple temporal vantages, and pointed in its self-reflexiveness.” The result of this “self-regarding frame” was the deployment of a form that was marked by an explicit self-awareness of its own function as a modern-day remediation of something like ancient romance.<sup>74</sup>

Curran does not explore the possibility that these innovations in poetry during the Romantic period could have influenced thinking about genres other than the poetic ones, but there are reasons to believe that in the process of thinking about the relation between ancient and contemporary forms of poetry, the Romantics were in fact on the verge of developing a more capacious set of concepts about relations and interrelations among



genres. We are able to track this emergent awareness of cross-generic interrelation in the strategies of, and discourses about, ballad collecting during the Romantic period—as well as in the extent to which these ideas influenced contemporary poetic production. As Susan Manning has noted, “ballad collectors were the antiquaries of poetic culture,” and their recovered objects, as with physical artifacts of the material past, were difficult to locate and often needed to be handled sensitively so as not to compromise any trace they might contain of an extinct culture that they were once an integral part of.<sup>75</sup> Ballads were seen as particularly important for the way they bore the mark of an oral culture that, by the Romantic period, had been displaced by modernity and print culture.<sup>76</sup> Hence, the problem of a revival of interest in ballads in an age of print: the only way to present these ballads, once oral sources were located, was to remediate them in print.<sup>77</sup> Walter J. Ong has succinctly summarized the nature of this problem as follows: “Though words are grounded in oral speech, writing tyrannically locks them into a visual field forever. . . . This is to say, a literate person cannot fully recover a sense of what the word is to purely oral people.”<sup>78</sup> Obviously there is no related transformation of medium and therefore comprehension in the processes of recovery and presentation in material antiquarianism, and so balladeers were faced with a need to develop a distinctly media-based theory of balladry that could balance what they thought of as the loss of orality with the benefits of wide distribution offered by print technology and the growing publishing industry.

In a recent essay, Celeste Langan and Maureen N. McLane explore the growth of this media awareness during the Romantic period.<sup>79</sup> They write that “we find in this period a sustained effort to reimagine poetry not as a genre – a literary kind among others – but as a medium.” Thus,

We suggest that Romantic poets discovered that they needed to invent a “middle” for poetry, or rather, to reinvent poetry *as* a middle – to mediate between orality and print, as well as between an imagined “barbarism” and the triumph of commercial society. Thus it is possible to understand controversies surrounding the disputed term “poetry” as precisely an attempt to generate both media theory and media history.<sup>80</sup>

The way in which Romantic poetry demonstrates an extraordinary awareness of itself as a mediating channel—perhaps one that, as all mediating channels, necessarily imposes something of its own structure on the content that passes through it—contains intriguing potential for a narrative-based theory of generic interrelation, and suggests that the Romantics themselves may have been using the concepts that could serve as a foundation for such a theory perhaps without being explicitly aware of it.

In fact, once we spell out the specific details of the growing media awareness that leads poets to think of their poetry as establishing a channel between unlike media, we can begin to see how it maps onto one way of defining a theory of generic interrelatedness. Langan and McLane note that the question of “the medium of poetry” can imply two potential readings: “poetry’s medium and/or poetry-as-medium”:

To the extent that one imagines poetry as a notional content, an essence or virtual message that requires transmission, the poem-as-message might be hosted by a variety of media – the mouth, the hand (chirography), the printed page, the web; each is a medium of/for poetry. But insofar as “poetry” names a technology, poetry itself may be understood as a conduit, a channel – as the “medium” for some defined content.<sup>81</sup>

This “double sense,” they note, leads poets to attempt to “solve the problem of poetry’s medium” by “often mak[ing] poetry the explicit subject – and transmitted content – of the poem.” Thus, the ubiquitous frame narratives of Romantic poetry often make “the verse narratives . . . *almost* coincident with the poem itself, though in each case the ‘frame’ narrative serves to mark those verse narratives *as* a content.”<sup>82</sup> And, in so doing, they deliberately mark the function of poetic transmission as such—that is to say, the role of the figure (or perspective) who transmits the poem.

By putting it this way, I believe we can see that the relation between Romantic-era media consciousness and formal innovation is a topic that is properly the domain of media theory as much as it is the domain of narrative theory. One of the primary interests of narrative theory is to articulate not just the precise structure and function of narrator positions, but also to identify what difference small changes in that narrator position can have on the content that it represents.<sup>83</sup> Thus, when Romantic frame poems feature a bodiless third-person narrator-function alongside of (or surrounding) a representative of live, embodied minstrelsy, they are exploring and theorizing the relation between different kinds of narrators as much as the relation between different kinds of media. And, by focusing on the importance that different kinds of narrators make for the practice of storytelling, the Romantics open a potential pathway towards an acknowledgment of narrative-based generic interrelation that, as I have argued, genre concepts themselves obscure. Another way of saying this is that we can understand the significance of the Romantics having employed in their poetry the concepts of a media theory and a media history not only as providing an insight to the latent potentialities contained in their own concepts, but also as laying the groundwork for our own investigation into the situation

of generic interrelation during the Romantic period. We may be able to complete, and possibly improve upon, a project that the Romantics were not explicitly aware they had begun.<sup>84</sup>

**(ii) Form as Imaginative Structure: Expanding the Methods of Literary  
Historical Analysis**

If literary historical analysis has, at least since the Romantic period, been limited by its indifference to the channels of influence that connect the development of narrative poetry to the development of the novel, in this section I'll offer a broad theoretical blueprint for how we might begin to reorient our critical concepts and practices in the writing of literary history so as to address this shortcoming. It will be my argument that, when properly modified, the genre-theoretical work of Ralph Rader provides an intuitive and supple method for tracking narrative form as it is passed between genres, accumulating new complexities and valences (even as it sheds old ones) in the process. Specifically, I am interested in developing the aspects of Rader's thought that helps us to track the relations between oral narrative and print narrative on the one hand, and the minstrel-narrator, print-poetry-narrator, and novel-narrator, on the other hand. It is these connections, and the concepts that we use to identify them, that will serve as my principles of interpretation as I read through the poetry of Scott, and beyond, in Chapters Two and Three.

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A task as large as writing a “genuine literary history” begins, according to Rader, at the level of literary experience.<sup>85</sup> That’s because the kinds of changes that literary history should track result in new kinds of literary experience, and therefore literary experience is our primary access to the essential qualities of a text. But the kind of experience that Rader is interested in is not the highly variable sensation of approval or enjoyment that each reader registers differently for a variety of extra-formal, oftentimes culturally determined, reasons. Rather, he is concerned with the kind of experience that is objectively fixed, but only tacitly known—in the same way that we all tacitly know the rules of grammar even though we may not be able to express them formally. The literary historian must seek to define a genre so that it accounts for the way in which a reader experiences a text, and then explain why and how that genre changes in history.

Rader offered many different names for the defining formal feature of genre—the author’s “indwelling” intention, his “inferred intention,” or his “immanent purpose”—but never organized them all into one system or method.<sup>86</sup> Thus, while it is not my goal to impose coherence on the totality of Rader’s thinking on genre, I nonetheless think it is useful to collect what I take to be the most suggestive elements of his thought on genre under a single heading. As a genre theorist, Rader thought of himself as developing a “formalist perspective,” which, categorically speaking, is correct. But his unique focus on the relation between form and experience on the one hand, and experience and genre on the other hand, calls, I think, for a more expressive term.<sup>87</sup> Thus, while I’ll often use the term “form” to identify what is being shared between genres in the history of generic interrelation, I’d like here to emphasize the specific relationship between form and

experience by using another of Rader's terms—namely, “intrinsic imaginative structure.”<sup>88</sup>

An intrinsic imaginative structure is a work's implicit organizing principle, intuitively apprehended in the process of reading itself, that determines our imaginative experience of the relations among its various elements.<sup>89</sup> Rader frequently invoked the experience of reading first-person poetry to illuminate this formal concept: in Robert Browning's “My Last Duchess,” for example, we experience the Duke as we would experience overhearing one person talking to another—“from the outside in, his inner self inferred solely from external signs”; in Thomas Gray's “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard,” on the other hand, “the churchyard actor is conceived by the poem from within, so that we participate in his mental activity as if his eyes and his experience had become the poet's and our own.”<sup>90</sup> In this contrast, we see how differences in form, or imaginative structure, result in different relationships between poet and speaker that are felt in the experience of reading; the nature of these relationships is the objective foundation of any experience we have of the poem.

Rader, of course, never attempted to use this coupling of form and experience as a tool for tracking the broader movements of form in the history of generic interrelation—but I believe that his theoretical methodology is most useful for the way it suggests how such a history could be determined. For example, Rader claims that the history of first-person poetry proceeds by individual poets learning how “to make vital and seemingly autonomous images of our selves and of others, real and fictional, by means of representation in words, [which] was not itself a capacity given and automatically available in our natural endowment but only a creative potentiality that had to be

historically discovered, articulated, and developed.” This dual process of discovery and development is key to Rader’s understanding of how the history of genre unfolds, because it implies that “the nature of generic conventions themselves [is that they are] specifically invented, inherited, and redeployed with creative variation by the succession of writers working with them.”<sup>91</sup> This formulation places a great deal of importance on the individuals whose innovations condition or enable the innovations of subsequent writers, and sets up a system of inheritance and development that plausibly treats generic development as if it were a kind of technological development, innovation on prior innovation.<sup>92</sup> It is also, importantly, a method that is not invested in making the kinds of distinctions that restrictive concepts of genre encourage us to make. That is, by honoring the elements of our reading experience that might appear to be obvious, he ends up producing a technique that is capable of tracking basic formal features as they pass through the channels of influence that connect poetry and the novel.

In his discussion of the history of the genre of the novel, however, Rader offers a more robust account of the kinds of non-literary influences that can play a role in genre history, and begins, therefore, to suggest how a broader range of historical and cultural factors might be brought to bear on his method of literary historical analysis. Thus, for example, he argues that the eighteenth-century “novel of moral action” developed, gradually, in response to a “commitment to moral instruction imposed by the most fundamental critical assumptions of the time, assumptions which the novelists shared and positively accepted as the basis of their work” (“From Richardson to Austen” 220). It took a series of gradual innovations and inheritances—from Richardson to Fielding to Burney—until, ultimately, Jane Austen was able successfully to represent moral paragons

whose “significant misjudgments” do not amount to “moral error” (as they do with Richardson’s *Lovelace*) but who are nonetheless capable of generating an interesting plot rife with tension and concern (as Richardson’s *Sir Charles Grandison* and Burney’s *Evelina* were not) (232). That is, the only reason that Austen’s readers can experience her characters’ subtle moral psychology in such a way as to understand the complex relation among internal goodness, misjudgments, and external action, is that she created an imaginative structure capable of generating this experience; but the only reason she felt compelled to develop the novel in such a way is because of cultural beliefs about the ethics of plot and suspense. Austen’s skill as a writer is therefore given literary historical primacy, but the significance of her innovations can be divorced neither from the pressures of culture that contributed to her moral views, nor from a long history of genre that preceded her.

It should not go without saying, however, that the kind of literary history that Rader himself told using his method of genre-historical analysis is one that too often emphasized the idea that the power of individual aesthetic examples alone were the primary movers in literary-historical development—over and against broader historical conditions, including those that might have contributed to the way in which a work’s aesthetic value was calculated. Thus, while I think Rader offers a useful beginning for developing concepts about the history of generic interrelation, and in deriving a theory that can both identify and help to explain its signature movements, I will at best only be offering a modified version of his methodology.<sup>93</sup> A literary history must take seriously the notion that individual authors are sometimes capable of exerting disproportionate influence on his or her successors, while also being aware that a complex interrelation of



cultural factors (including the economic and social structure of the literary marketplace) may determine the extent to which the influence of an individual is capable of spreading widely or narrowly throughout the system of literary production.<sup>94</sup>

The process of inter-generic influence will rarely, if ever, be as simple as one innovation being installed neatly into another genre. Rather, there is an important aspect to the process of integration whereby what originated in one genre *comes to be* coherent with, or integral to, another genre. There are external pressures (social, cultural, economic) as well as formal-historical pressures (the dependence of future innovation on past innovation) powering this process of inter-generic influence, but there is also, I would argue, an entirely internal constraint to inter-generic influence. The effect of this internal constraint will vary from situation to situation—depending on the nature of the influencing genre and the influenced genre—but it will always be a subset of a much deeper and more fundamental constraint: namely, the requirement that an innovation in one genre is fungible with the formal environment of another genre. To take an obvious example, it is difficult to imagine how poetry's formal elements of rhyme, meter, and lineation would find accommodation within the formal environment of the novel without, as occurred in many Romantic-era novels, simply inserting measured, lineated poetry into the prose of the novel. While this kind of formal interaction is clearly important, it does not amount to the kind of generic interrelation that I have in mind. Instead I want to explore how a more fundamental line of inter-generic influence might pass through the channel connecting various narrative genres—like narrative poetry and the novel—as a result, as it were, of the compatible blood types of the different formal environments.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **The Form of Media History: Narrator-Space *The Lay of the Last Minstrel***

It was not uncommon during the Romantic era to think of the relation between ancient oral poetry and the modern culture of print as being essentially antithetical—the latter, for a variety of reasons, was understood to have displaced or occasioned the downfall of the former. Thus, in Thomas Percy’s minstrel origins theory (1765)—where he claimed that the authors of ancient English poetry belonged to a class of revered professionals whose “skill was considered as something divine,” and whose “persons were deemed sacred”—it was the development of the press and its processes of publication and mass distribution that were blamed for the devaluation of this noble strain of English poetic heritage: “But as the old Minstrels gradually wore out, a new race of ballad-writers succeeded, *an inferior sort of minor poets, who wrote narrative songs merely for the press.*”<sup>95</sup> Making an even stronger causal argument in his 1830 “Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad,” Walter Scott wrote that

The invention of printing necessarily occasioned the downfall of the Order of Minstrels. . . . When the Metrical Romances were very many of them in the hands of every one, the occupation of those who made their living by reciting them was in some degree abolished, and the minstrels either disappeared altogether, or sunk into mere musicians, whose utmost acquaintance with poetry was being able to sing a ballad.<sup>96</sup>

In a similar vein in another essay on popular ancient poetry, Scott commented that “the press . . . at length superseded the necessity of such exertions of recollection” upon which, it was widely agreed, pre-literate oral composition and transmission were dependent.<sup>97</sup>

This rather simplistic way of thinking about the relation between oral poetry and print culture, which amounts to what Paula McDowell has termed a “confrontational model of print and oral tradition,” has been widely criticized by recent scholars of orality, popular speech, and media history.<sup>98</sup> In examining the influence of literacy and print on early-modern English culture, for example, Adam Fox has shown that in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England “there was no necessary antithesis between oral and literate forms of communication and preservation; the one did not have to destroy or undermine the other.”<sup>99</sup> Instead, the early-modern media landscape was marked by the way in which oral and literary forms of communication “formed a dynamic continuum, each feeding in and out of the other to the development and nourishment of both.”<sup>100</sup> That we ever thought otherwise, as it is now more or less understood, is the fault of the idealizing and nostalgic discourses of balladry and orality that emerged as a part of the ballad revival of the Romantic era. Susan Stewart, for example, has accused Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) of “invent[ing] . . . a historical rupture” between ancient and modern forms of poetry—“a separation that would enable the ‘discovery’ of the ballad and the authentication of that discovery as in fact a recovery.”<sup>101</sup> And Nicholas Hudson, somewhat less polemically, has argued that “European intellectuals achieved a clear perception of ‘orality’ only after their own world had been engulfed in print,” that is to say, well into the eighteenth century.<sup>102</sup> At its most heated, this contemporary correction of the media-historical record occasionally provides cover for a critique and dismissal of

the Romantic era more generally: “The sensibilities of the Romantic era *needed* to believe in the idea of a pure oral tradition of the folk which had perpetuated itself since time immemorial, untainted by the influence of the written word.”<sup>103</sup>

But, if the Romantics were at times mistaken about the robust relation between orality and print, their mistaken ideas nonetheless proved to be important spurs for the development of some of the era’s most characteristic and celebrated aspects of poetic form. Indeed, what has perhaps not been fully appreciated is the extent to which developments in poetic form can be analyzed not simply as literary instantiations of problematic theories of media history, but, more interestingly, as tools for thinking about and theorizing those very same questions of orality and print from a distinctly literary perspective. Thus, as I’ll argue in this and the next chapter, the formal innovations in the best-selling poetry of Walter Scott produce a decidedly more complex account of media-historical change than he, and his contemporaries, tend to be given credit for.<sup>104</sup> For Scott, media history is importantly intertwined with literary history, and the changes that make up these interrelated histories are best analyzed, as it were, from within the perspective of poetic narration itself. Thus, the question of what, precisely, was involved in the process by which oral poetics faded in importance while printed poetics achieved its modern dominance is, as much as anything else for Scott, a narratological question: who are the speakers of poetry in print, and what is their relation to the speakers of oral poetry?<sup>105</sup>

Moreover, to the extent that Scott *is* implicated in producing a “confrontational model of print and oral tradition,” where ancient and modern forms of poetry are thought to be essentially antithetical, I will show that Scott is equally interested in analyzing both embodied speakers of ancient poetry and the disembodied speakers of print narration in

terms that are approximately similar. For different reasons—the minstrel’s historical and social displacement, the print narrator’s essential disembodiment—both narrating figures are understood by Scott as unable to participate in the worlds that draw (or once drew) their attention. In other words, while ancient and modern forms of poetic narration continue to be thought of as in conflict with each other, they are both, equivalently, thought of as in conflict with the conditions of socially-recognized personhood, and are therefore understood as beyond consideration for inclusion in the communities to which their stories are directed. This is an important and unrecognized aspect of Scott’s innovations at the level of narrative form that, as I’ll argue in Chapter Four, proves to be his most influential formal contribution to the novel in the Romantic period.

### **I. Melting and Dissolving in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel***

In his first major narrative poem, the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), Scott examines the changes that make up media history from the perspective of an ancient minstrel who is supposed somehow to have survived well past the historical decline of minstrelsy. According to Scott’s 1805 introduction,

The Poem was put into the mouth of an ancient Minstrel, the last of the race, who, as he is supposed to have survived the Revolution, might have caught somewhat of the refinement of modern poetry, without losing the simplicity of his original model.<sup>106</sup>

In this moment Scott is explaining his choice to render his verse in an unusual metrical style (which he acknowledges, in his 1830 preface to the poem, as plagiarized from Coleridge), but his point clearly also accounts for his choice to bring together what had

been considered to be historically opposed modes of narration, and helps us to make sense of the development, over the course of the poem, of the relationship between the two.<sup>107</sup> For, as he says, the minstrel is “the last of the race” and finds himself in a “modern” context that is essentially different from the historical and cultural context out of which his form of poetry developed.

The *Lay* therefore explicitly combines and examines the end of one literary historical moment and the beginning of another—and both the end and the beginning can be thought of as being symbolically contained by the single figure of the last minstrel. As I’ll argue, this media-historical thought experiment provides Scott with an occasion to analyze not *simply* the displacement of first-person embodied narration by the medium of print, but rather the intermediate stage, or set of stages, that make up the *process* of that displacement. And, as we’ll see, Scott ends up suggesting, rather than a final and clearly-demarcated displacement, something more like an absorption or partial transubstantiation, whereby the form of print media (and the narrative voice that dwells in its pages) comes temporarily to interpenetrate (or intermediate) itself with the practice and form of oral poetics.

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The *Lay* is constructed as a frame narrative—a formal observation that might not at first appear to be particularly significant.<sup>108</sup> Scott, however, invests the formal contrast between the separate narrative layers with historical density, thus figuring the impersonal, extradiegetic frame narrator as a representative of modern print narration, and the minstrel—whose “lay” otherwise makes up most of the poem’s narrative content—as a

representative of oral narration that can only be glimpsed through the mediating lens of another, invisible, form of narration. The frame, therefore, must be thought of as substantively determining the meaning of the poem—it is used by Scott as a tool for thinking about the thematic and historical concerns that are of primary importance for understanding the figure of the minstrel.

As Maureen McLane has recently shown, the difference between the spoken word of an ancient minstrel and the necessity of remediating that spoken word for modern audiences in print had been the subject of poetic and antiquarian discussion for decades before Scott wrote the *Lay*. Eighteenth-century antiquarians and balladeers had, for example, in developing the ballad collection, adopted what McLane calls a “rhetoric of annotation,” a scholarly procedure for “cit[ing] . . . access to native informants” in a way that “attempt[ed] to restore to ballads – or bestow upon them – the aura of oral immediacy and bodily presence that mechanical mass-reproduction and remediation in books threatened to strip from them.”<sup>109</sup> McLane argues that this attempt to give primacy to and maintain the trace of orality in print was not perfected until Scott published his influential three-volume ballad collection, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-3), in which

we see a theoretically informed, methodologically savvy handling of sources, with a strong emphasis on documenting oral-transmission and ethnographic transcription, such that Scott and his contemporary Robert Jamieson frequently cited recitations and communications of recitations as the sources used to “correct” or supersede manuscript and preciously published versions of ballads.<sup>110</sup>

In other words, the question of the difference between oral poetry and its remediation in print was not just a prevailing concern among the antiquarians who developed the genre of the ballad collection and the record of performances—it was a prevailing concern with Scott, the antiquarian who helped complete the development of the ballad collection, and the poet who, two years after publishing the *Minstrelsy*, became the best-selling author of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. In the *Lay*, therefore, the literary historical record appears to compel us to think of the juxtaposition between the two different narrative layers as centrally involving a media-historical dilemma. More specifically, the relation between the aged minstrel, on the verge of dying and incapable of creating his own self-sustaining narrative frame, and the impersonal, placeless and bodiless narrative “voice” that dwells in the extra-diegetic narrative frame designed to support (or shed representation/survival upon) the minstrel’s story, represents the difference between orality and its remediation in print, between the presence of a lived relation to ancient tradition and the modern recreation of a bygone literary and historical era.

Through a series of alterations in the narrator-position of the minstrel himself, Scott represents the formal transition between the two kinds of narration—from embodied first-person minstrelsy to the impersonal third-person narration (associated with modernity and print). My focus here on the formal attributes or processes that make up the representation of the minstrel throughout Scott’s poem participates in, but does not reproduce the arguments of, the typical formal discussions of frame poetry in the Romantic period. For example, Erik Simpson has recently argued that the defining characteristic of what he calls “minstrel writing” is the way it enacts a “split between performing and editorial personae”—that is, between the narrating minstrel and an editor



(or editorial apparatus) that presents and comments upon the minstrel's narration.<sup>111</sup>

Simpson's analysis follows in a mode of thinking inaugurated by Jane Millgate and Stuart Curran, who have both convincingly argued that the frame structure of ballad-revival-influenced narrative poetry is one of the era's most distinctive and formally significant devices. Writing specifically about Scott, Millgate has argued that, beginning with his work as the editor of the *Minstrelsy* and continuing through his literary career as a poet and a novelist, the use of "framework and annotations seem almost to derive from an uneasiness on Scott's part with poetry in its naked condition – as an artifact detached from the world of rational discourse. . . . The external structures of Scott's poems and novels . . . draw the reader into the world of the poem even while continually reminding him of its fictionality."<sup>112</sup> And, speaking generally about the category of "Romance" in the Romantic period, Curran has shown that "the romance of the Regency is seldom seen without a frame, and generally that frame is both more contemporary than the contents of the poem itself, enforcing multiple temporal vantages, and pointed in its self-reflexiveness."<sup>113</sup>

While I don't dispute the value of these arguments, my claim here is specifically about the figure of the minstrel himself, whom Scott depicts in a series of formal transitions—not between oral performance and scholarly explanation, but between what Scott imagines to be the distinct differences (and possible, if only temporary, similarities) between ancient and modern forms of poetic narration. Unsurprisingly, this results in a rather vexed mixture of optimism and pessimism about the possibility for continuity or necessity of rupture between past and present. Thus, over the course of the poem, we see two related movements that characterize the nature of this relation: first, the minstrel, in

the act of narration, flits in and out of a kind of ghostly and disembodied voice, thus not only formally enacting what the frame of the *Lay* suggests (namely, the disappearance of the minstrel as a living, embodied being), but also causing the poem itself to bear the mark of that disappearance; and, second, the frame narrator's comments about and interruptions of the minstrel's speech suggest an awareness that its own existence is predicated on a more extreme version of the alienation and loneliness that characterize the minstrel.

Clearly this minute and detailed method of analyzing the historical and formal relation between oral poetics and print modernity does not strictly accord with the recent critical accounts of Romantic-era media theory. Nor, however, is it without precedent in the history of Scott's thinking. In his 1802 introduction to the *Minstrelsy*, he wrote that the purpose of his "Notes and occasional Dissertations"—the scholarly apparatus he employed to frame, explain, and justify his poetic selections—was to preserve the "popular superstitions, and legendary history, which, if not now collected, must soon have been totally forgotten."

By such efforts, feeble as they are, I may contribute somewhat to the history of my native country; the peculiar features of whose manners and characters are daily *melting and dissolving* into those of her sister ally.<sup>114</sup>

Scott's notion that the distinct cultural features of Scotland were "melting and dissolving" into those of England is a particularly suggestive way of thinking about his country's recent cultural history. It was not new, of course, to think of Scotland as having recently undergone important and somewhat drastic changes. James Macpherson, for example, in his 1765 "Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity, &c. of the Poems of Ossian" wrote that

The complete work, now printed, would, in a short time, have shared the fate of the rest. *The genius of the highlanders has suffered a great change within these few years.* The communication with the rest of the island is open, and the introduction of trade and manufactures has destroyed that leisure which was formerly dedicated to hearing and repeating the poems of ancient times. . . . When property is established, the human mind confines its views to the pleasure it procures. It does not go back to antiquity, or look forward to succeeding ages. The cares of life increase, and the actions of other times no longer amuse. *Hence it is, that the taste for their ancient poetry is at a low ebb among highlanders.*<sup>115</sup>

But the difference between the “great change” observed by Macpherson and the “melting and dissolving” spoken of by Scott is that their observations are calibrated by different degrees of sensitivity to the changes that make up historical process. Macpherson thinks of his work as valiantly resisting a historical tide that otherwise must have destroyed (what he claimed were) the original poems of Ossian. But Scott’s finer attention is directed towards the *gradual* ongoingness of historical change, a process that the figure of “melting and dissolving” suggests will result, if not ultimately then intermittently, in customs, traditions, legends, and so on, that are no more Scottish than they are English, distinguishable neither as products of ancient nor of modern cultural institutions.

Part of my goal in this and the following section is to indicate how Scott’s sensitivity to the “melting and dissolving” of Scotland’s local history finds a formal analogue in the frame structure of the *Lay*. Specifically, while the frame itself—temporalized as modern, formally and historically separate from the world in which the

“last minstrel” resides—can be seen as an implicit acknowledgment that what was ancient can no longer be understood or accessed except by way of a modern frame that necessarily alters or signifies the extinction of the object it represents, my argument here is that Scott’s use of the frame contains an added layer of complexity. That’s because for Scott what is of interest is not simply the frame, but also its relation to the figure of the minstrel and the world he occupies. Thus, just as the scholarly notes that fill the pages of the *Minstrelsy* do not so much *prevent* the “melting and dissolving” that they were conceived as a response to, but instead can be thought of as helping the reader to sense the effects of the gradual historical process through which that change takes place, so too the frame in the *Lay* functions to help identify the figure of the last minstrel in his ambiguously intertwined, and constantly shifting, relation to modern forms of narration. What I want to argue, then, is that, while Scott’s formal-historical method does to a certain extent employ a “confrontational model of print and oral tradition,” it does so in such a way as to simultaneously acknowledge (in the words of William Warner) that “a particular medium acquire[s] its salience within a multimedia buzz of communication.”<sup>116</sup>

The rise of print may indeed bring about the downfall of an oral tradition that helped to sustain the institution of minstrelsy, but it did not do so immediately or without significant overlap. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* shows Scott’s interest in the messy and profound changes of an historical process that may have looked very different in its moment of unfolding than it does in our retroactive understanding of its final effects.

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I'll discuss how Scott represents a "melting and dissolving" media history below, but first, having thus established the terms of my argument, I would like to say a bit more about how I'll be analyzing Scott's innovative approach to narrative form in this poem—which I'll use the term *narrator-space* to describe. My use of the term narrator-space is designed to reflect an awareness that this narratological category might be seen as a complement to Alex Woloch's work on "character-space," which has proven to be influential in the study of the relationship between minor characters and protagonists in the realist novel.<sup>117</sup> Woloch defines character-space as "mark[ing] the *intersection* of an implied human personality...with the definitively circumscribed form of narrative"; it tracks "how the discrete representation of any specific individual is intertwined with the narrative's continual apportioning of attention to different characters who jostle for limited space within the same fictive universe."<sup>118</sup> Narrator-space, however, does not track how narrators distribute their attention to characters (as in Woloch), but rather in the formal techniques by which attention is distributed among a variety of narrating voices or perspectives themselves.

Reading for the movements within narrator-space allows us to focus our attention onto the space of relations among potentially available narrating voices, a formal dynamic that structures many important Romantic-era poems. Consider, as one famous example, the marginal prose glosses in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. The effect and function of these glosses have been debated since Coleridge first added them to his 1817 revision of the poem, with critical opinion largely breaking into two camps: those who censure the glosses for oversimplifying (or even lying about) the archaic obscurity of the original (1798) poem, and those who argue that

the glosses contribute to kind of historicized layering of commentary that is not in and of itself intended to be understood as a final or authoritative reading of the poem's symbolic content.<sup>119</sup> But, regardless of Coleridge's ultimate reason for adding the glosses in 1817—whether it was a cowardly capitulation to critics who wanted a more recognizable Christian narrative, or a daring formal representation of the “time-specific cultural limitations” that he believed always affect the act of interpretation—the very pervasiveness of these debates suggest the relevance of a category like narrator-space for organizing and analyzing many of our most basic experiences, judgments, and interpretations of the poem. Because, as the history of the poem's reception clearly indicates, the dynamic between the narrating voices—who, placed side by side, each tell a slightly different version of the same story—produces a complex literary experience that is at once difficult to analyze and impossible to ignore. In a different way, Lord Byron's *The Giaour* is also marked by an apparent interest in, and dedication to exploring, the difference that multiple narrating voices can make for the work's ultimate meaning and effect. While there has been some disagreement about just how many narrating voices appear in the poem—two, four, and “multiple” narrators that are ultimately reducible to one bard's “virtuoso production” have all been suggested<sup>120</sup>—Byron's own claim that he originally heard the story “recited by one of those coffee-house storytellers who abound in the Levant” has, for most readers, served as a key for understanding this poem's fragmentary variety.<sup>121</sup> Thus, the direct speech that constitutes over a third of the poem's total lines is in the service of simulating the experience of hearing (and also of forgetting parts of) a narrative that originates in and is preserved by the oral tradition.<sup>122</sup>

While my purpose in this chapter is primarily to explore the ways in which Scott manipulates narrator-space within his first long poem, I've briefly discussed these poems by Coleridge and Byron to indicate the potential scope of a category like narrator-space for the study of Romantic-era literature.<sup>123</sup> And, more relevant for my current purposes, reading for the movements within narrator-space helps to focus our attention on some of the formal responses to questions of the relation between oral and print narrative in the Romantic era. The question of the effects of modern scholarly commentary on ancient ballad material, the limits of human memory versus the limitless capacity of print to record information, and the transformative effects of remediation (from orality to print) are all variously staged and examined within narrator-space in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *The Giaour*. As I'll show, reading for the movements in narrator-space in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* allows us clearly to see Scott's theory of "melting and dissolving" historical conditions in action—where what Scott represents is a gradually changing, and occasionally intertwined, formal and historical relationship between orality and print. In this poem, different narrators "jostle for limited space within the same [narrative] universe"—indeed, at times within the same narrating figure (the minstrel)—and the occasionally antagonistic forces that structure their relationship are suggestive of the history of media-historical change whose implications Scott uses narrator-space to think through and represent.

## **II. Unsealing the Tomb**

The minstrel's elaborate story of love, death, revenge, deceit, magic, armed combat—and of course minstrelsy—begins in the aftermath of a bloody encounter

between the Buccleuch and Carr clans. The Buccleuch's Chief (none other than Lord Walter Scott) has been slain by his enemies, and as we join the action Lord Walter's widow, a mysterious sorceress identified only as "the Ladye," is already in the midst of plotting her unholy and magical revenge.<sup>124</sup> For reasons that remain darkly unspecified, her plan requires that she consult an ancient book of evil sorcery, which she knows is hidden in the nearby Melrose Abbey, and she immediately dispatches her best knight, the illiterate Sir Deloraine, to retrieve it for her. The scenes at Melrose Abbey are among the most magical and mysterious in the whole poem: the evil book is buried in the tomb of the wizard, Michael Scott, and every step towards opening his tomb and extracting the book is accompanied by an increasing sense of fear and metaphysical disturbance. Moreover, as the minstrel narrates these scenes his own narrator position is marked as passing between forms identifiable either as being embodied and present or ghostly and impossibly separate. The strange effects of exhuming the book are therefore reflected both at the level of plot and at the level of form, where dread as mood is matched by a disturbance in the structure of the narrating voice itself.

After speeding through the night on horseback, fording wild rivers and passing through wondrous scenes of moonlit beauty and ruin, Deloraine finally arrives at the gothic Melrose Abbey, where he is met by an old monk who leads him to the tomb of Michael Scott. Here, the characteristically unflinching Deloraine finds himself to be "chilled with dread / And his hair did bristle upon his head" (*L*, 2.16). He begins to lift the heavy iron bar that covers the tomb, and, as he does so, a great and unexpected light spills out of it into the darkness of the abbey, prompting the minstrel to offer this description:



I would you had been there to see  
How the light broke forth gloriously,  
Streamed upward to the chancel roof,  
And through the galleries far aloof!  
No earthly flame blazed e'er so bright:  
It shone like heaven's own blessed light,  
And, issuing from the tomb,  
Showed the monk's cowl and visage pale,  
Danced on the dark-browed warrior's mail,  
And kissed his waving plume.

(*L*, 2.18)

In this instance, the narrator sets up three possible relations to the scene: first, there is “you” (the audience, marked as not present); second, *them* (the monk, Deloraine, both present in the scene); and third, the narrative position itself. The narrator’s careful descriptions emphasize his orientation within the same physical space as the monk and Deloraine *while at the same time* emphasizing that the monk and Deloraine are the only two living beings in the room. Thus, the narrator sees the light “stream *upward*” and flow *away* into “galleries far aloof,” which is approximately how the two men would perceive the movement of light; and, though the narrative perspective is fully exterior to the characters in the scene, it is close enough to distinguish their facial features, to sense the frightened Deloraine’s “beating heart,” and to track “the toil-drops [that] fell from his brows like rain.” The narrative position appears to be in the same physical space as

Deloraine and the monk, but it is not (and cannot be) physically embodied there. It must float, ghostlike, in the presence of the figures it describes.<sup>125</sup>

To understand the narrative complexity of this scene, it is helpful to distinguish between the minstrel's audience, whose experience would be determined primarily by the minstrel's performance, and the audience of readers who are imagining the scene projected by the text of the *Lay*. Ralph Rader's concept of "objective literary experience" (discussed in chapter one) helpfully captures the import of this distinction: it speaks to the aspects of a reader's experience that are determined not simply by the narrator, but by the way the text organizes imaginative relations among reader, narrator, character, and scene. Thus, while readers of the *Lay* may be encouraged to notice details about the minstrel's shifting narrator position with respect to the space his characters occupy, the minstrel's immediate physical audience would not: both he and they know that his story takes place over a century before he narrates it, and so of course he couldn't literally have been there. Following Peter J. Rabinowitz, I'd like in this scene to distinguish between "narrattees"—that group of listeners "to whom the narrator is addressing himself or herself"—and what Rabinowitz calls the "narrative audience," the members of which are said to "occupy a role which the text forces the reader to take on." Members of the narrative audience must ask themselves "What sort of reader would I have to pretend to be—what would I have to know and believe—if I wanted to take this work of fiction as real?"<sup>126</sup> For our purposes, "the work of fiction" refers not to *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* but to the story sung by the minstrel himself. Granting this, we are able to see that our objective literary experience in this scene is rather distinct from that of the narratee's, because we are able (perhaps even required) to experience the scene in the abbey as being

rendered from within a perspective that is projected as actually being in the room—or rather, from the perspective of a figure who is both present in the same space as the monk and Deloraine without being physically embodied there.

The significance of the formal distinction between possible audience positions is made especially salient by looking at the structure of the narrative voice in the moment after Deloraine re-seals the wizard's tomb and, along with the monk, wanders “with wavering step and dizzy brain” through the abbey:

*'Tis said as through the aisles they passed,  
They heard strange noises on the blast;  
And through the cloister-galleries small,  
Which at mid-height thread the chancel wall,  
Loud sobs, and laughter louder, ran,  
And voices unlike the voice of man,  
As if the fiends kept holiday  
Because these spells were brought to day.  
I cannot tell how the truth may be;  
I say the tale as 'twas said to me.*

(*L*, 2.22, emphasis added)

Here the minstrel marks his own objective distance from the scene he is describing, which is just the opposite of his mode of narration in stanza 18. When the tomb is unsealed, the narrative voice projects the position of an observing, disembodied presence, simultaneously in the room with and seeing the same things as the monk and the knight without also being physically embodied there; when the tomb is re-sealed, the narrative

voice projects a position approximate to that of an audience member listening to the minstrel's lay, external to the story, knowing only what was "said to me." This flitting between narrative positions is felt as, and representative of, the difference between the kinds of experiences engendered by disembodied print narration on the one hand, and live minstrelsy on the other. It is the formal representation of a set of chaotically uncertain moments that make up the most liminal and delicate stages in the transition between different historical forms of narration.

It was, of course, commonplace during the Romantic period to associate the category of immediacy with the experience of reading poetry in general, and of reading ancient ballads in particular. Thus, Hugh Blair praised Macpherson's edition of the poetry of Ossian in part for the way the poet

makes us imagine that we see it [what he describes] before our eyes: . . . he places it in such a light that a painter could copy after him. This happy talent . . . transmits that impression in its full force to the imagination of the others. . . . In a word, whilst reading him, we are transported as into a new region, and dwell among his objects as if they were all real.<sup>127</sup>

And Scott, in one of his many essays on the subject of popular ancient poetry, wrote that

The [ancient] poet must have that original power of embodying and detailing circumstances, *which can place before the eyes of others a scene which only exists in his own imagination.*<sup>128</sup>

Thus, the scene of the tomb's unsealing could be thought of as nothing more than an instantiation of a generally accepted principle of poetic representation—after all, poetry is *supposed* to transport readers into spaces that can only be occupied imaginatively. On this

reading, the moment of the tomb's re-sealing—when the minstrel marks his and his story's objective distance from the haunted abbey—would be thought of merely as a device (one of many available to a seasoned storyteller) for transitioning into another part of his story.

But, this kind of thinking would be mistaken, for it fails to take into account the precise nature of the narrative position through which the reader experiences the scene of the tomb's unsealing: it is not simply *as if* we were there—it is that the narrative position itself projects a position that must be thought of as oriented in approximately the same physical space as the monk and Deloraine. The question of how to interpret the relation of these scenes in the abbey, therefore, cannot simply be understood in terms of the immediacy or distance implied by the minstrel's narration, but instead must be focused on the distinctly media-historical question of physical versus ghostly (dis)embodiment. It is useful, on this point, to recall what Maurice Blanchot once described as the distinctive features of the “narrative voice” as it appears in “language in writing”:

The narrative voice [is] a neuter voice that speaks the work from that placeless place in which the work is silent. . . . The narrative voice that is inside only insofar as it is outside, at a distance without any distance, cannot be embodied: even though it can borrow the voice of a judiciously chosen character or even create the hybrid position of mediator (this voice which destroys all mediation), it is always different from what utters it, it is the indifferent-difference that alters the personal voice. Let us say (on a whim) that it is spectral, ghost-like.<sup>129</sup>

This is a compelling description of what Scott represents during the scene of the evil book's disinterment. The narrated experience is both "at a distance" (in the sense that it is formally separate from the diegesis of the scene) and at the same time "without any distance"; it most certainly "cannot be embodied"; and, as I've been arguing, it must be understood as being "spectral, ghost-like." But, what Blanchot's dazzling analysis does not get at is the way in which the narrative position projected by the minstrel both "cannot be embodied" and yet must be experienced as possessing certain traits of physical embodiment. Thus, the minstrel projects a position in narrator-space that is suggestive of an intermediate stage, a kind of indeterminate "melting and dissolving," between the kind of physical embodiment that is characteristic of live minstrelsy and the kind of ghostly disembodiment that is characteristic of print narrative. That the minstrel immediately reverts to projecting a position in narrator-space that is decidedly separate from the physical scene in which it was moments earlier an occupant of serves only to emphasize the subtlety of Scott's media-historical vision. That is, in these moments in the *Lay*, Scott is demonstrating the minute and uncertain changes that make up media history—changes that may be moving towards a recognizable and inevitable future (whereby orality is eradicated and print dominates), but that, intermediately, can look quite unusual, and perhaps, even if only momentarily, appear to defy the unrelenting logic of forward progress.

### **III. Framing Antagonism, Historicizing Separation**

Scott also uses the frame itself to dramatize the media-historical relationship between live minstrelsy and print-based narration. The voice of the frame narrator, as the

poem's early reviewers recognized and praised, is styled in a distinctly modern mode that is meant to contrast with the style of the minstrel's narration. Thus in March of 1805 the *Literary Journal* wrote that "were we to point out the passages of the poem which afforded us the most pleasure, we should select those in which the minstrel himself makes his appearance [that is, in the frame]. The introduction, and the concluding stanza of each canto, have an excellent effect, and are very pleasing."<sup>130</sup> And, writing a month later, *The Edinburgh Review* opined that

In the very first rank of poetical excellence, we are inclined to place the introductory and concluding lines of every canto, in which the ancient strain is suspended, and the feelings and situations of the minstrel himself described in the words of the author. The elegance and beauty of this *setting*, if we may so call it, though entirely of modern workmanship, appears to us to be fully more worthy of admiration than the bolder relief of the antiques which it encloses, and leads us to regret that the author should have wasted, in imitation and antiquarian researches, so much of those powers which seem fully equal to the task of raising him an independent reputation.<sup>131</sup>

The modern preferences of these reviews—which index not only the easy pleasures provided by the frame but also account for the sense that minstrel's tale is a "waste"—are useful for understanding the way in which the frame and the tale relate to each other within the poem itself. For, as the poem makes clear, it is only by way of the formal apparatus of the frame that the minstrel and his tale are able to appear at all. But this is precisely the situation that is most interesting to Scott, and rather than allowing the

minstrel's voice to be silenced or completely absorbed by the frame (as at least one of his reviewers would have preferred), he is instead committed to making legible the minstrel's dependence on the narration of an un-named other.

The frame narrator speaks in a kind of impersonal narrative voice that can only exist in print or writing, and can therefore have no bodily or socially-embedded connection to the historical situations it may appear to mediate transparently. This narrative other is a voice that will be familiar to readers of the realist novel, but its structure in Scott's poem possesses a rougher edge, the origin of which can be traced to the use of intrusive authorial narrators in the eighteenth-century novel. Dorrit Cohn, writing of this kind of authorial narrator, describes him as

jealously guard[ing] his prerogative as the sole thinking agent within his novel, sensing that his equipoise would be endangered by approaching another mind too closely and staying with it too long; for this other mind [the mind of a character], contrary to his own disincarnated mental existence, belongs to an incarnated and therefore distinctly limited being.<sup>132</sup>

The relation in narrator-space between the print narrator and the minstrel is partially structured by this eighteenth-century novelistic relationship between a main character (here, the minstrel, who is also a narrator) and an authorial narrator (invisible, but essential, to the telling of the story). Thus, the frame of the *Lay* does not simply invoke a historicized comparison of different forms of narration, but it also understands this relationship as being defined by its antagonism.



We see the frame narrator's interest in emphasizing the minstrel's extreme vulnerability and relative weakness early and often. In the introduction to the poem, for example, "the last of all bards" is depicted in silence, thinking only of his "tuneful brethren" who are all dead, and "wish[ing] to be with them at rest." Even after the minstrel fortuitously happens upon an audience, he continues throughout the *Lay* to be depicted in silence—either because he is worried that he has lost the attention of his audience to indifference, or because he is too weak to continue—and, each time this occurs, the frame narrative returns, turning the minstrel once again into object of another's narration. One typical example occurs at the end of the first canto:

---

Here paused the harp; and with its swell  
The Master's fire and courage fell:  
Dejectedly and low he bowed,  
And, gazing timid on the crowd,  
He seemed to see in every eye  
If they approved his minstrelsy  
.....  
Encouraged thus, the aged man  
After meet rest again began.

(*L*, 1.31)

This interruption of the minstrel's lay by the frame narrative occurs in the middle of a stanza, and is set off by a long, black line, as if to emphasize both the proximity and the incompatibility of the two forms of narration.<sup>133</sup> The formal point, therefore, opens onto a

media-historical one: the void left by the death or silence of embodied minstrelsy is filled in by a kind of narrative voice that, if not dead, was also never living: it is a “ghost-like,” free floating and bodiless form of impersonal narration that, unlike the minstrel, is under no requirement to feel anything in the moment his story is received.

But, even more than what *replaces* the oral tradition, the bodiless narration of the frame narrative could be seen as a reflection of the changes wrought upon the minstrel’s narrative form as a *result* of its death. Consider, for example, this telling moment at the end of canto 4, which begins with the minstrel speaking of his long-dead “minstrel brethren,”—

Why should I tell the rigid doom  
That dragged my master to his tomb;  
.....  
He died!—his scholars, one by one,  
To the cold silent grave are gone;  
And I, alas! survive alone,

—and ends in the voice of the frame narrative (once again this transition occurs in the middle of a stanza, and is set off by a long, black line):

For, with my minstrel brethren fled,  
My jealousy of song is dead.

---

He paused: the listening dames again

Applaud the hoary Minstrel's strain.

(*L*, 4.35, emphasis added)

The minstrel here acknowledges that the significance of death for his master and rivals is that they are relegated to “the cold silent grave.” The silence of the grave, of course, is particularly important in the context of the formal structure of the *Lay*, for, just as the minstrel himself is sometimes unable or unwilling to speak in his own voice, his fallen brethren are no longer capable of generating their own narratives but must instead forever be the object of another minstrel's narration. But the difference between narrator and narrated takes on greater significance when it is no longer a matter of one minstrel telling the story of another minstrel, but rather an alien form of impersonal narration absorbing and therefore silencing the distinct features of minstrelsy. The nature of that difference is demonstrated when the minstrel, after reflecting on his severe isolation, stops speaking, as if to mimic the silencing fate he knows is waiting for him. The frame narrative immediately fills this void of silence, transforming the “I” of the minstrel into the “he” of third-person narration. But, as the line of separation between the frame and minstrel's narrative suggests, this reconstitution of one narrative in another narrative results in a rather severe deformation of the oral tradition—a tradition which was imagined as proceeding by way of a continuously repeated oral memory. Thus, as Hugh Blair wrote of “the manners of Ossian's age”

The great object pursued by heroic spirits, was ‘to receive their fame,’ that is, to become worthy of being celebrated in the songs of bards; and ‘to have their name on the four grey stones.’ *To die, unlamented by a bard,*

*was deemed so great a misfortune, as even to disturb their ghosts in another state.*<sup>134</sup>

But, in this moment, Scott emphasizes both a formal and historical discontinuity that specifically displaces or interrupts the kind of lineal continuity of one minstrel remembering his ancestors in an unchanging idiom. This new narrative voice is as unconnected to the oral tradition as it is unmoored from a physical body. It is stripped or purified of the vulnerabilities of embodied life, and freed from the burden of speaking only in the presence of a live audience. The historical form of minstrelsy must be transformed by its own death, must become so irrelevant as to be virtually banished from the communities it once played a vital role in serving, before it can re-form and re-emerge as the kind of ethereal narrative impersonality displayed by the frame's separate and unquestionably dominant position.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **The Future of Narration: Stabilizing Narrator-Space in *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake***

As Jane Millgate has argued, Scott's "preference for a narrative of his career [that is] based on a combination of imitation, association, and happy accident, should not be allowed to obscure the large part that was in fact played by deliberate experimentation with a wide range of forms."<sup>135</sup> Indeed, we now have evidence that Scott was more than willing to praise his own work as being of the highest quality, just so long as this puffery was published under the mantle of anonymity.<sup>136</sup> But, one thing that is quite interesting about Scott's compulsion to critique his own works is that, in the process of appearing to belittle his work, he occasionally provides evidence of his own awareness of the formal complexity contained within it. For example, in a letter of 1805—shortly after the *Lay* was published—he admits that the poem is "deficient in that sort of continuity which a story ought to have."<sup>137</sup> In another letter, written a month later, he laments that it "is a wild story wildly told."<sup>138</sup> And, even a year later, he continues to feign embarrassment for the attention his poem receives from his peers and his betters, when he writes: "Could I have thought it would have attracted so much of your attention I would have endeavoured to have written it better & in consequence might very likely have not done it so well."<sup>139</sup> As Scott issues these pronouncements on his own work, he appears simultaneously to acknowledge the importance of the "wild" instability in his narrative voice for the overall effect of the *Lay*.<sup>140</sup> And, while it is true that he thinks "the flimsiness of the story might have been corrected by a little thought and attention which I

now regret not having bestow'd upon it," he also, in the same letter, claims that were he to have fixed the regrettable deficiency in his poem, he "might very likely not have done it so well."

The "continuity" that the poem lacks, Scott acknowledges, is its most distinguishing feature—it's what he chooses to emphasize, what appears to matter most to him about it. I would not, of course, suggest that Scott was attempting to communicate a covert message to his friends—or to posterity—that only the techniques of close, suspicious reading could reveal. Rather, my point is that we may join Scott in bracketing the question of whether his poetry is any good, without losing sight of its most distinguishing features.

Over the rest of his career as a poet, however, Scott's formal interest in the changes that make up media-history gradually shifts. In what follows, I'll trace the trajectory of Scott's thinking about the relation between print and orality by looking at his next two published poems, *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake*. As I'll argue, Scott's changing interests are indexed, at first, by a growing sense of regret at the loss of access to ancient orality, and finally, by a surprising indifference to the importance of such formal- and media-historical issues. This will provide the groundwork for my argument in Chapter Four, where I propose that one of Scott's most important and original contributions to literary history is the way in which he uses narrative voice in his poetry to analyze the social and historical positions of the figures who narrate or are narrated. His "wild stor[ies] wildly told," in short, create a formal wake that affects the trajectory of literary development in the Romantic period. Specifically, I'll argue that there is a

fairly clear line of inter-generic heritage extending from this aspect of Scott's poetry through Jane Austen's elegant deployments of narrative voice in her marriage-plot novels.

### **I. Narrative Self-Othering in *Marmion***

*Marmion* (1806), Scott's second major poem, marks an important new phase in his development of narrator-space, and begins to suggest the trajectory that his interest in narrative form will take over the course of his literary career. In the *Lay*, we saw narrator-space emerging as a formal structure within the poem as a way of tracking not only the relation between live minstrelsy and print narration, but also the overtaking and absorption of the former by the latter. This process is seen as a kind of gradual progression, even if it is from one form of narration to another unrelated kind—the connection is historical, and the emergence of print narration appears, both formally and thematically, to be predicated on the eventual death of the last minstrel. In *Marmion*, however, the polarity between these two forms of narration is exacerbated within narrator-space, suggesting now a skeptical attitude about the possibility that they can be analyzed as historically or formally proximate with each other. This is indexed primarily by two developments in the structure of the disembodied print narrator and of the place it occupies within narrator-space. First, this ghostly figure begins to display a new sense of longing for the embodiment that is necessarily denied to it—begins, that is, to register that the passing or minstrelsy does not merely reflect the relative strength of print narrative but also indicates a permanent lack contained within it. The print narrator, therefore, internalizes a nostalgia (characteristic of the Romantic period) for the very kind of narration it was thought to have displaced. Second, narrator-space becomes crowded

by a variety of other narrating figures—so that it is no longer simply a site for exploring the difference between two poles on the continuum of narrative voices, but rather now presents an opportunity for the disembodied position of the print narrator to analyze its own strangeness, and specifically the impossibility of establishing or maintaining a connection with world of the story and the live storytellers contained within it. Even as a connection between the different diegetic realms, and hence different kinds of storytelling, is repeatedly sought after, that connection is just as repeatedly denied, and the denial of this connection is neither hidden nor glossed over but is instead deliberately emphasized as being integral to the formal structure of *Marmion*.

The wild variations in *Marmion*'s narrator-space suggest a growing frustration or skepticism about the possibility of recuperating a form of ancient poetics for a modern audience. But, in the process of registering this media-historical skepticism, Scott also begins to develop a more malleable print-narrative voice, one that can occupy a number of positions unrelated to and uninterested in the fate or form of live minstrelsy. This proliferation of new narrative positions results in a new kind of unsettled volatility—a new take on a “wild story wildly told”—that, at this point in Scott's career as a poet, he is unable or unwilling to resolve. He will continue to work on stabilizing the relation between the unruly narrative voices that interrupt the smooth flow of his plotted romances throughout his career as a poet, and even through his early years as a novelist. The formal chaos of *Marmion* represents a first step in the process of narrative stabilization.

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About halfway through the second canto of *Marmion*, the print narrator is depicted—in a position that will be familiar to readers of the *Lay*—as occupying a dark and remote space that he emphasizes is unoccupied by any but a few, named characters. In this case, the scene is even more isolated than the wizard's tomb at Melrose Abbey, for the underground chamber in which the action takes place is itself a well-kept secret. This so-called “Vault of Penitence,” a dungeon hidden deep within the bowels of a Catholic convent on the isle of Lindisfarne, is only ever visited by those about to be damned to live burial, and by those few who wield the power to issue such a judgment.<sup>141</sup> It is to this place that the disgraced nun, Constance de Beverley, has been taken to receive judgment for breaking her vows of celibacy and running away “for three long years” (*M*, 2.27) with the poem's eponymous hero/villain. After using Constance to help him frame Sir Ralph De Wilton, the fiancé of the very rich Clara de Clare, Marmion heartlessly returns Constance to the convent, so that he will be free to seek to attach himself to Clara (who, incidentally, is hiding from Marmion at the same convent).<sup>142</sup>

We catch up with Constance just as she is about to receive her sentencing, and the narrator takes extra pains to draw attention to the inaccessibility and obscurity of the dungeon within which he nevertheless occupies a defined spatial position. It is a “den, which chill[s] every sense / Of feeling, hearing, sight,” and where the light of “a cresset, in an iron chain, / Which served to light this drear domain, / With damp and darkness seemed to strive.” Both “Victim and executioner / Were blindfolded when sent there,” and if any of the horrid screams that originate there happen, improbably, to reach the ears of the nuns on surface of the island, the sounds are so altered in their passage that “The hearers blessed themselves, and said / The spirits of the sinful dead / Bemoaned their

torments there” (*M*, 2.17, 2.18). The dungeon is secret, hidden underground, barely visible even by those whose blindfolds are lifted once they enter its damp space—and insofar as sound is capable of escaping its confines, it cannot be recognized by those who hear it as having originated in the natural world.

And yet, the narrative perspective is itself projected as being oriented within a defined space within this room. The narrator sees the room in the same way that a human present in the room would see it, even though there can be no doubt that the perspective occupied by the narrator does not belong to any of the figures who are specifically named as being there. From his perspective, he sees “the heads of convent three” lit from behind (“Behind were these three judges shown / By pale cresset’s ray”), and, though he can see minute details of the Abbess of Saint Hilda’s face—

The Abbess of Saint Hilda’s there  
Saw for a space with visage bare,  
Until, to hide her bosom’s swell,  
And tear-drops that for pity fell,  
She closely drew her veil;

—he is not close enough to distinguish anything but the outlines of the face of the Prioress, who is seated, “shrouded” in darkness, just beyond his view, and whose identity therefore can only be “guess[ed]” at:

Yon shrouded figure, as I guess,  
By her proud mien and flowing dress,  
Is Tynemouth’s haughty Prioress,  
And she with awe looks pale.

Based on my foregoing argument about how the relation between live minstrelsy and print narration is depicted in the *Lay*, then, we might think of this moment in the Vault of Penitence as having neutralized one aspect of the interesting volatility that previously characterized that relationship. Consider, for example, that this moment in *Marmion*, like the unsealing of the wizard's tomb in the *Lay*, is reported from a hybrid narrative position that projects attributes both of human embodiment and ghostly disembodiment—and yet, unlike in the *Lay*, Scott does not take this opportunity to explore the significance of the difference between embodiment and disembodiment. The narrative voice in this scene in *Marmion* does not flit in and out of embodied and disembodied perspectives, but rather appears to be comfortably situated in its hybridity—neither fully suggestive of print-based or oral-based narrative positions.

One obvious explanation for the apparent formal stability of the print narrator in the early scenes of *Marmion* is that, thematically, the poem does not require any direct comparison between ancient and modern forms of narration. In the *Lay*, the relation between live minstrelsy and print narration was a continuous object of attention—and Scott showed his commitment to thinking about and analyzing their similarities and their differences, something that is reflected in both obvious and subtle ways in the formal structure of the poem. But, in *Marmion*, where the passing of minstrelsy is not obviously the main topic or interest of the poem (or poet), it would not appear that Scott is compelled to register the way in which print narrative and oral narrative are not only different, but locked in a kind of historical conflict. Scott, however, seems never to stop thinking about the fate of live minstrelsy in the age (and space) of print, for, in *Marmion*

much more emphatically than in the *Lay*, Scott uses narrator-space to represent a decidedly conflict-laden relation between oral and print-based forms of narration.

A particularly interesting example of this new development of Scott's formal experimentation occurs in the poem's third canto. One night, as Marmion and his train travel through the wilds of Scotland to the court of King James in Edinburgh, they stop to rest at an inn. Here, Marmion calls upon Fitz-Eustace to sing "some lay, / To speed the lingering night away" (*M*, 3.7). And, as the print narrator prepares temporarily to cede his position in narrator-space to the minstrel, he offers a description of Fitz-Eustace's voice, in which he simultaneously appears to insist upon, and to regretfully acknowledge the impossibility of, a connection with him:

A mellow voice Fitz-Eustace had,  
The air he chose was wild and sad;  
Such have *I heard in Scottish land*  
Rise from the busy harvest band,  
When falls before the mountaineer  
On Lowland plains the ripened ear.  
Now one shrill voice the notes prolong,  
Now a wild chorus swells the song:  
*Oft have I listened and stood still*  
*As it came softened up the hill,*  
*And deemed it the lament of men*  
*Who languished for their native glen.*

(*M*, 3.9, emphasis added)

The cadence and wording of “oft have I listened and stood still” is likely to call to mind Wordsworth’s lyric voice in “Tintern Abbey,” where he declares “How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee, / O sylvan Wye!,” but the more illuminating comparison may be with another Wordsworth poem, “The Solitary Reaper.”<sup>143</sup> In “The Solitary Reaper,” Wordsworth recalls the experience of coming upon the beautiful voice of a distant singer:

Behold her, single in the field,  
Yon solitary Highland Lass!  
Reaping and singing by herself;  
Stop here, or gently pass!  
Alone she cuts, and binds the grain,  
And sings a melancholy strain;  
O listen! for the Vale profound  
Is overflowing with the sound.<sup>144</sup>

The perspectives of Wordsworth and the *Marmion* narrator appear, at first, to be nearly identical: both indicate their participation in a world of human affairs, and their emplacement in a rural setting where they unexpectedly come upon the beautiful singing of another, unnamed human figure. Indeed, given that it is unlikely for Scott and Wordsworth to have known about each other’s poems when they were writing their own, it is striking that the similarities between these narrative vignettes extend all the way to the incidental detail of the Scottish nationality of both singing figures.<sup>145</sup> Moreover, though Wordsworth doesn’t actually represent the song of the solitary reaper, both he and the *Marmion* narrator similarly position themselves with respect to the poetry of another:

that is to say, they are both inclined, at least initially, to treat the second poet as the object of their own poetry.

But the differences between the two narrators are just as striking, and this can be seen most clearly by thinking about the role of narrator-space in each poem.

Wordsworth's narrating perspective is conceived by the poem as being a part of the same world as the "Highland Lass" that draws his attention—they both occupy the same physical and temporal space. This, of course, is perfectly consistent with Wordsworth's theory of poetic production, as articulated in his "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*, where he states that "I wish to keep my Reader in the company of flesh and blood," and that he intends to present himself as "a man speaking to men."<sup>146</sup> It is essential, in other words, that his narrating voice be seen as occupying the same plane of existence as the objects of his narration. Scott, on the other hand, has a nearly opposite formal interest: that is, he is most deeply concerned with the *differences* between print narration and live, embodied narration. Thus, the question of the relation between the *Marmion* narrator and Fitz-Eustace is more complex and uncertain. That is why we don't see the *Marmion* narrator assuming the "I" of human experience and personality until the poem itself calls for a comparison between two different narrative voices. Consider, for example, how implausible it would have been for the *Marmion* narrator to speak of his personal memory and of his relation to other humans (who are like himself) during the scene of Constance de Beverley's vivisection, in which his narrative access would seem to depend on his not being the same kind of embodied being as the other characters who are projected as physically present in the scene. On the other hand, consider how simple (indeed, how typical) it would have been for the *Marmion* narrator to compare the

qualities of Fitz-Eustace's voice to the Scottish harvesters without also asserting his own lived relation to those singers. By placing himself in a lived (spatial, aural) relation to the human singers, and then comparing those human figures to Fitz-Eustace, the *Marmion* narrator implicitly suggests that he is not in fact cut off from the world of orality that Fitz-Eustace's "mellow voice" once occupied—that the mediating effects of print don't thereby necessitate the erasure of orality. But, in attempting to establish a human relation with Fitz-Eustace from a position that is historically and formally separated from him, the *Marmion* narrator instead ends up reaffirming their essential differences. That's because the narrative procedure by which he draws his comparison with Fitz-Eustace involves adding an unintegrated formal layer on top of the diegesis of the poem, speaking of "the lament of men / Who languished for their native glen"—men who, it must be noted, do not and cannot belong to the same plane as Fitz-Eustace and the plot of *Marmion*. Print narration and oral narration, Scott seems to be suggesting, occupy planes of existence that are separated by more than just their medial identities—for, even when pressed into the same medial register, Scott causes their incompatibility to be an integral part of the reading experience itself.

But this strange behavior of the *Marmion* narrator quickly becomes more erratic, more suggestive of a figure who, in the words of Cohn, "jealously guards his prerogative as the sole thinking [narrating] agent in the novel [poem]." After Fitz-Eustace has finished singing his lay—a grim number about the fate that will befall those who betray their lovers—*Marmion* appears to be visibly disturbed, and this draws the narrator's attention. It is his changes with respect to what he is willing and able to say about *Marmion* that will be of most interest to me. At first, he writes:

The air was sad; but sadder still  
It fell on Marmion's ear,  
*And plained as if disgrace and ill,*  
*And shameful death were near.*  
He drew his mantle past his face,  
Between it and the band,  
And rested with his head a space  
Reclining on his hand.  
*His thoughts I scan not; but I ween*  
*That, could their import have been seen,*  
The meanest groom in all the hall,  
That e'er tied courses to a stall,  
Would scarce have wished to be their prey.

(M, 3.12, emphasis added)

Here the narrator projects a position similar to the one he occupied in the Vault of Penitence: he is looking intently at the face of someone under the strain of severe emotional distress, but he does not dip into his conscious or unconscious thought. While the narrator's view of Marmion's face is impossibly close, it is still a view that respects a line that separates Marmion's physical exterior from his mental interior: he observes only the physically visible symptoms of "disgrace" and "shame" that result from Fitz-Eustace's ill-chosen lay, and, when Marmion covers his face, it is from that point forward blocked from observation by the narrator (and everyone physically present in the hall).



Indeed, the narrator makes it explicit that, while he *could* read Marmion's thoughts if he so chose, he instead chooses only to hint at what they *might* suggest.

But the narrator does not stay external to Marmion's thoughts for long, eventually choosing to see so penetratively that he sees with clarity things that Marmion himself can only see obscurely. Before he does this, however, the narrator takes the opportunity, one last time, to emphasize a truth universally acknowledged about the danger of attempting to invade Marmion's privacy: "Woe to the vassal who durst pry / Into Lord Marmion's privacy!" (*M*, 3.15). This, the narrator immediately follows with a description of the situation of Marmion's private thoughts about Constance in the immediate aftermath of Fitz-Eustace's lay, a moment when he has been doubly agitated by his guide, the mysterious Palmer, who has predicted "The death of a dear friend" (*M*, 3.13). The narrator writes:

*His conscience slept—he deemed her [Constance] well,  
And safe secured in distant cell;  
But wakened by her favorite lay [the lay sung by Fitz-Eustace],  
And that strange Palmer's boding say  
That fell so ominous and drear  
Full on the object of his fear,  
To aid remorse's venom'd throes,  
Dark tales of convent-vengeance rose;  
And Constance, late betrayed and scorned,  
All lovely on his soul returned:  
Lovely as when at treacherous call*

She left her convent's peaceful wall,  
Crimsoned with shame, with terror mute,  
Dreading alike escape, pursuit,  
Till love, victorious o'er alarms,  
Hid her fears and blushes in his arms.

*'Alas!' he thought, 'how changed that mien!  
How changed these timid looks have been,  
Since years of guilt and disguise  
Have steeled her brow and armed her eyes!*

.....

*'Would' thought he, as the picture grows,  
'I on its stalk had left the rose!  
Oh, why should man's success remove  
The very charms that wake his love?—*

(M, 3.16-17, emphasis added)

I have emphasized the text in which the narrator represents Marmion's conscious and unconscious thoughts—a clear reversal of his decision, a few lines earlier, to leave Marmion's interiority unobserved. But, even more interesting than the narrator's decision to surpass (the distinctly embodied, though apparently self-imposed) boundaries of interior access, is that he does so in a way that establishes not a relative, but a total superiority of narrative position. That is to say, in the middle of the *Marmion* narrator's presentation of this scene, he dramatically alters the intrinsic imaginative structure

through which he projects his narrative position, replacing a distinctly limited and human-like perspective (seeing Marmion from the outside, inferring his inner thoughts based on external signs alone) with a position so omniscient that it can see the action of Marmion's thoughts in a way that literally no other figure (including Marmion) could. Throughout his conscious ruminations, Marmion frequently self-interrupts with the phrase "and I the cause," without ever directly acknowledging the effect (the death of Constance). That's because the narrator can see clearly what Marmion cannot—or cannot yet—namely, that "his conscience slept." This is diagnosing an aspect of Marmion's mind that, necessarily, is not something that he could see directly; for, if he could, it would not be correct to say that "his conscience slept." Moreover, the narrator tracks the action of Marmion's memory of Constance, as it at first "return[s]" to his "soul," and then "grows" to be more vivid. This is a perspective on the *mechanics* of conscious experience—a view of ideas *as they pass into* consciousness—and is not a perspective that is embedded within or limited by the conscious experience itself.<sup>147</sup>

Here, then, the narrator appears to be drawing attention to the extent to which he is capable of floating freely in and out of his character's consciousness over and against that character's explicit wishes, even though moments before, when the narrative space was crowded by Fitz-Eustace, the narrator seemed to be doing just the opposite—that is, taking pains to demonstrate his connection, his similarity, to the position occupied by an embodied observer. He moves from a self-referential "I" that appears to inhabit a similar historical and social position as Fitz-Eustace, the minstrel, to the kind of superior disembodied narrator that can access the spaces of consciousness that not even the conscious figure can see clearly. This set of movements is partially reminiscent of what

we saw in the *Lay*, when the narrative position projected by the minstrel flitted between that of an embodied storyteller (knowing only what “said to me”) and a disembodied presence in the abbey with the monk and Deloraine.

The difference in *Marmion*, however, is that the kind of embodiment that is associated with minstrelsy is now analyzed in terms of its capacity for social-embeddedness, something that Scott and his contemporaries thought was lost in the media- and formal-historical transition to print-based narration. In the *Lay* this question of social integration was less significant because minstrelsy was figured as nearly extinct—beyond the historical point at which a comparison between print and oral narrators could reasonably be thought of in those terms. But in *Marmion*, the print narrator appears to want to prevent the reader’s ability to distinguish between his own position and that of Fitz-Eustace’s on the basis of their relation to embodiment and sociality—which is why he compares himself to the kind of person who can hear a “harvest band” of Scottish singers, and partially obscures his ability to penetrate deeply into Marmion’s thoughts. By projecting the perspectival limitations of embodiment, along with its capacity for social integration, into his own narrative position, the *Marmion* narrator nearly comes across as being a similar kind of narrating figure as Fitz-Eustace. What shatters the illusion is the extent to which his self-identification with the hearers of Fitz-Eustace’s “mellow voice” fails as a result of the necessary formal separation between narrator and character, and the extent to which he violates his own self-erected boundaries by assuming a position of dominance with respect to Marmion’s conscious and unconscious thoughts.

Unlike the scene of Constance de Beverley's vivisepture, in which the narrator-position was defined by a comfortable hybridity between aspects of embodiment and disembodiment, Scott appears unwilling to deploy such a stable narrative form when representatives of oral and print-based narration are brought into contact with each other in narrator-space. Instead, we see Scott theorizing an important and necessary separation between the two, one that is not simply based on embodiment and disembodiment, but that is also based on the capacity for sociality. The fluctuations in narrator-space, that is, represent the failure of print-narration to enter into the kind of social space that was once available to minstrels. While this lack is formally necessary (how could words printed on a page be thought of as entering into actual human relations?), we see Scott investing it with a kind of sociological or theoretical density that will come not only to bear on his later poetic and novelistic developments, but also on the development of the novel more generally. What is denied to print-based narration will eventually come to signify what is at risk in defying the personality-limiting demands of sociality.

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If the *Marmion* narrator is driven to present himself as possessing the capacity for sociality when brought into contact with minstrel-narration, he exhibits an altogether different kind of reaction when faced with a narrative voice that is emphatically ghostly, and emphatically not of this world. In the fifth canto, when the action of the poem is centered in Edinburgh as Marmion makes one final effort to persuade King James not to go to war with England's vastly superior army, the gathered leaders are confronted by a "vision, passing Nature's law / Strange, wild, and dimly seen" (*M*, 5.25), that addresses

the entire city in an aggressive plea for peace. “This supernatural citation,” as Scott points out in a note, “is mentioned by all our Scottish historians. It was, probably . . . an attempt, by those averse to the war, to impose upon the superstitious temper of James IV.”<sup>148</sup> But, while the Palmer (now revealed to be Clara’s falsely accused fiancé, De Wilton) appears to be skeptical of the literal truth of the “strange pageantry of hell” (*M*, 6.8), the *Marmion* narrator is simultaneously transfixed and repulsed by what he sees in it.<sup>149</sup> He draws attention to its “Figures that seemed to rise and die, / Gibber and sign, advance and fly, / While nought confirmed could ear or eye / Discern of sound or mien.” “Yet,” he goes on

darkly did it seem as there  
Heralds and pursuivants prepare,  
With trumpet sound and blazon fair,  
A summons to proclaim;  
But indistinct the pageant proud,  
As fancy forms of midnight cloud  
When flings the moon upon her shroud  
A wavering tinge of flame;  
It flits, expands, and shifts, till loud,  
From midmost the spectre crowd,  
This awful summons came: —

(*M*, 5.25)

This narrative description is partially moored to the perceptions of the Abbess and De Wilton, who have met in secret to discuss the treachery of Marmion. But, the lack of narrative markers that would unequivocally attribute this dense and detailed description

of a mysteriously supernatural voice to the perceptions of the human figures in the scene clearly suggests that the narrator is drawing on his own view of the scene as well. Indeed, the descriptive language at times nearly suggests—without definitively marking it as such—the perspective of the narrator in a form that has no connection to the figures in the scene: “As fancy forms of midnight cloud / When flings the moon upon her shroud / A wavering tinge of flame” is a general poetic observation, a technique of description that appears to come from the narrator, not the Abbess and De Wilton.

What is interesting, therefore, in the narrator’s description of the supernatural citation, is the way he emphasizes that it is undeniably present to the senses, but at the same time appears or “seems” only “darkly”—unlocatable in the physical space that it nonetheless must somehow be occupying. It is literally ghostly, “indistinct” in the way it “flits, expands, and shifts,” and in this sense it begins to resemble one of the forms taken by the very disembodied narrator who describes it. Represented on the page, then, is a rather complex narrative situation: it is the perspective of one disembodied narrative voice as it registers and reacts to the supernatural strangeness of another, equally disembodied narrative voice. The sense that this disembodied narration is invasive, vaguely evil, and so improbable as to be thought a trick explicable by way of some undetermined natural cause, is a telling revision of, or commentary upon, the *Marmion* narrator’s attempt to be thought of as potentially participating in the world of sociality in the same way as Fitz-Eustace or his audience. Pressed into the same diegetic level as the plot of the tale—as the narrator’s failed attempt to establish continuity with Fitz-Eustace was not—the narrative voice can see how actual people would react to the live recitation

of bodiless words. The possibility of continuity with the characters he narrates, something the narrator variously appears to long for, is therefore absolutely denied.

Once again, the dictates of plot require the *Marmion* narrator to cede his position in narrator-space temporarily to another narrating voice—but, on this occasion, the process through which this transfer between narrative voices takes place is drawn into the purview of the poetic representation itself. Thus, while on one plane the reader witnesses or is made to feel that different narrative voices are jostling for the limited space available to the primary narrator, on another more abstracted plane the reader is able to see the *Marmion* narrator wondering about the necessity of such a jostling. It is a moment in which the *Marmion* narrator appears to awaken to his own power (over the field of representation), and where what had previously seemed like a genuinely contested space of relations between equally viable narrating voices is refigured as a space organized by a clear hierarchy. In other words, the *Marmion* narrator seems to become aware of his position as *the Marmion* narrator—and in the process theorizes his own position as roughly equivalent to that of the author, or as the figure whose decisions about narrative representation are basic, not truly subject to the exigencies of the very plot that it is charged with conveying.

As the supernatural citation goes through its catalogue of predictions of certain doom, the *Marmion* narrator works his way back into the dominant position in narrator-space, and reclaims the narrative “I” as his own:

[Supernatural Citation:] ‘Prince, prelate, potentate, and peer,  
Whose names *I now shall call*,  
Scottish or foreigner, give ear!



Subjects of him to sent me here,

At his tribunal appear

*I summon one and all:*

I cite you by each deadly sin

That e'er hath soiled your hearts within'

.....

[Print Narrator:] Then thundered forth a roll of names: —

The first was thine, unhappy James!

Then all thy nobles came;

Crawford, Glencairn, Montrose, Argyle,

Ross, Bothwell, Forbes, Lennox, Lyle,—

*Why should I tell their separate style?*

*Each chief of birth and fame,*

*Of Lowland, Highland, Border, Isle,*

*Fordoomed to Flodden's carnage pile,*

*Was cited there by name*

.....

*Shift we the scene. — The camp doth move*

(*M*, 5.26-27, emphasis added)

The moment when the *Marmion* narrator pauses to think out loud, asking himself “Why should I tell their separate style,” is an unusual and, for our purposes, theoretically dense moment. It occurs a few lines after the narrator has reassumed his position in narrator-

space (that is, he is now the narrating agent, the figure who speaks “I”), but has not yet stopped serving as a conduit for the narration of the supernatural citation. But then, in the middle of his recitation of names, it is as if he suddenly understands something about his own position in the space of print-narration that had not been registered before: namely, that he wields a sorting or limiting power that no other narrating figure can lay claim to. By taking back his position within narrator-space, the *Marmion* narrator reorients the diegetic layers so that each belongs to its proper realm—that is, other narrating voices can only gain representation on the page if mediated by his own superior position. And thus, the quick and clunky “Shift we the scene. — The camp doth move” is a tellingly disproportionate exertion of narrative power that demonstrates the reality of the re-established narrative order. For, not only is the supernatural citation reduced to mere summary; it is just as easily displaced, to be forgotten in the influx of new narrative action.

What we see in *Marmion*, therefore, is Scott developing his interest in narrative form in a way that is both connected to what he began to work out in the *Lay*, but that also marks a new understanding of the same set of issues. First, rather than representing a diegetic narrator as he flits in and out of a form of himself that functions similarly to (or is projected as a version of) a disembodied print narrator, we now see Scott thinking about this historical transition, as it were, from the other side: that is, now we see the print narrator in the process of flitting in and out of a narrative position that attempts, without succeeding, to approach the position of sociality and embodiment. But it is the failure of the print narrator to establish this continuity with a form of narration different from itself that distinguishes the new level of formal complexity in *Marmion*’s narrative

structure. We might say that Scott represents a more advanced stage in the historical process of gradual displacement and absorption that characterized the fading of live minstrelsy and the rise of print mediation—but we might also say that we see Scott moving towards a more skeptical or pessimistic understanding of the relation between orality and print than had previously characterized his optimistic development of the ballad collection form (as McLane has noted), and that continued to affect his approach to narrative in the *Lay*. Second, in bringing the disembodied print narrator into direct contact with a more obviously othered form of its own narrative position—ghostly, variable, frightening—we see a kind of theorization and increased awareness of the formal and cultural outsidership that this narrative position must assume with respect to the ancient forms of narration that it displaces. In overtaking and moving quickly away from the supernatural citation, the print narrator demonstrates his own discomfort with such a position, implying a desire to avoid acknowledging his essential disconnection from the world he narrates—even as his forcing of the narration away from one event and onto another clearly demonstrates just how separate his position must be.

## **II. The View From...Somewhere Else**

Though *Marmion* sold well, and was apparently beloved by Scott's contemporaries—"bad rhymes notwithstanding," in the words of John Sutherland—critical opinion turned against it in a way that it did not with his publication of the *Lay*.<sup>150</sup> Most notable among the poem's detractors was Francis Jeffrey, Scott's friend and lead literary reviewer at the *Edinburgh Review*, who criticized, among other things, the poem's "broken narrative," complaining that in comparison to the *Lay*, "the place of the

prologuizing minstrel is but ill supplied, indeed, by the epistolary dissertations which are prefixed to each book of the present poem.”<sup>151</sup> The poem’s lengthy verse epistles that serve to introduce, or interrupt, each canto of the poem, continue to feature prominently in recent discussions of *Marmion*, with most arguments over the past forty years or so tending to emphasize the epistles’ subtly integral relation to the tale of the poem. For example, John Pikoulis, J. D. McClatchy, Jane Millgate, and Nancy Moore Goslee all variously affirm the connection between the verse epistles and the tale by emphasizing that the theories of artistic composition that Scott develops in the epistles find their counterpart in the actual practice of the writing of the tale.<sup>152</sup> Continuing in this strain, though complicating matters a bit further, Stuart Curran argues that their connection consists in the way they “intrude reality” upon and therefore demystify the fictional tale. Thus, he writes, “their insistent self-contemplation subtly recasts the fictional materials of the poem” such that they “remind us of our distance from its materials and yet of how the tissue of associations connected with landscape, culture, and scholarship inevitably draw us back into the distant past.”<sup>153</sup> In the tale as a whole, Curran argues that Scott “gives nothing he does not at once take away, for he is obsessively aware that fiction is not fact, though fact is continually embroidered into fiction, and that the past is never the present, though its print is indelible upon it.”<sup>154</sup>

I also want to argue that the relation between the verse epistles and the tale is an integral one, but rather than emphasizing how the two, in Millgate’s words, are “separate yet responsive” to each other, I want to claim that it is their failure to achieve a coherent connection—the way in which they remain “separate” and *hence* “responsive” to each other—that most clearly demonstrates Scott’s developing attitude about narrative form in

the age of print.<sup>155</sup> If my foregoing discussion about narrator-space within the tale of *Marmion* suggests Scott's pessimism or skepticism about the capabilities of print narration to maintain a connection with even a faint trace of the social world that it mediates, then the failure of the epistolary frame of *Marmion* to establish a connection with its plot simply serves to re-emphasize that aspect of Scott's media-formal consciousness. But it also suggests Scott's commitment to developing narrative form despite these limitations in the medium of print, for, in his proliferation of possible spaces within narrator-space (or, to borrow from Woloch again—in Scott's proliferation of possible narrator-spaces within an ever expanding *narrator-system*), we are able to see that Scott does not confine himself to nostalgic longing for the absolute loss of the past, but in fact seeks to enrich narrative form such that narration itself bears a mark of the effects of this loss. Though he never stops thinking about orality completely, he does eventually stop feeling as if its representation in print is deeply problematic—or, at the very least, he moves on to working on aspects of narrative form that are not directly connected to that problematic. Here, in *Marmion*, we are able to see Scott in something like a middle or transitional stage of that process of thought—at a point when he has neither given up on a formal analysis of the fate of orality in print, nor shifted his focus entirely to other aspects of narrative form. In *Marmion*, therefore, the disintegration of the links that at least tenuously connected print narration and live minstrelsy, frame and plot, in the *Lay* mimics Scott's gradually changing thought. His pessimism about the future of orality in print occurs alongside of, and at least partially as a result of, his development of narrator-spaces that are unconnected with oral transmission.

The verse epistles, which are uncomplicatedly set in the present of the poem's composition, and are written to Scott's friends, focus on various topics of national, personal, and artistic interest. Speaking in his own voice to his friends in a manner that seems quite separate from anything that might be of interest in the plot of the tale, it is clear enough why these verse epistles would have been thought to be separable from the tale itself.<sup>156</sup> And yet, Scott does seem to have an interest in finding a way of connecting these two separate narrative realities. For example, in the verse epistle that introduces Canto 3—that is to say, the introductory verse epistle that immediately follows the high drama of Constance de Beverley's gruesome execution—Scott begins by bragging to his friend, William Erskine, about the “flow unconfined” of his tale. But, the fact of the longish verse epistle itself, as well as the apparent pains that Scott takes to visually and formally mark its separation from the tale, automatically undermines this sentiment of his, as will be immediately obvious just by looking at how the page is formatted:

INTRODUCTION TO CANTO THIRD.

TO WILLIAM ERSKINE, ESQ.

*Ashestiel, Ettrick Forest.*

LIKE April morning clouds, that pass  
With varying shadow o'er the grass,  
And imitate on the field and furrow  
Life's checkered scene of joy and sorrow;

Like streamlet of the mountain north,  
 Now winding slows its silver train,  
 And almost slumbering on the plain;  
 Like breezes of the autumn day,  
 Whose voice inconstant dies away,  
 And ever swells again as fast  
 When the ear deems its murmur past;  
*Thus various, my romantic theme*  
*Flits, winds, or sinks, a morning dream.*  
 Yet pleased, our eye pursues the trace  
 Of Light and Shade's inconstant race;  
 Pleased, views the rivulet afar,  
 Weaving its maze irregular;  
 And pleased, we listen as the breeze  
 Heaves its wild sigh through Autumn trees:  
*Then, wild as cloud, or stream, or gale,*  
*Flow on, flow unconfined, my tale!*

(*M*, 3.0, emphasis added)

Scott follows this introductory verse paragraph with several hundred more lines of musing verse before returning to the tale. The last thing he writes before ceding his narrator-space to the *Marmion* narrator is this nearly-identical couplet: "Though wild as cloud, as stream, as gale / Flow forth, flow unrestrained, my tale!" (*M*, 3.0). Thus, in twice drawing attention to the "unconfined" or "unrestrained" flow of his tale, he actually

ends up drawing attention to the extent to which he has prevented it. Because, in the hundreds of lines of verse that separate the end of the second canto and the beginning of the third canto, literally no aspect of the plot of *Marmion* has been advanced. Talking *about* the flow of the tale cannot *be*, and in fact it must prevent, that continuous flow.

The failure to achieve a connection between the narrator-space of the verse epistles and the flow of the poem's plot is a move that mirrors the failure of the print narrator to establish a connection with the world of embodied sociality represented by Fitz-Eustace. Just as in the scene where the print narrator tries to establish a continuity with Fitz-Eustace by adding an unintegrated formal layer on top of the main plot of the poem, Scott's narration in the verse epistle attempts to establish a continuity with the flow of his tale by expanding upon an unintegrated formal layer that actually *delays* the continued flow of his tale. In each case, the narrative positions use the tools that are at their disposal—speaking in their own, separate, diegetic space—and thus, inevitably, end up drawing attention to just how separate their diegetic spaces are. In the absence of an actual connection (formal, historical, medial, thematic), all that remains is the empty assertion by the various narrators about their conviction that such a connection in fact exists. It is interesting, therefore, that in this moment in the verse-epistle Scott claims that his “various . . . romantic theme / Flits, winds, or sinks,” in a way that is strikingly similar to the way the *Marmion* narrator described the supernatural citation, which appeared to “flit, expand, and shift” before his eyes, as if formed by “fancy.” If Scott can describe the theme of his allegedly flowing, but actually interrupted, tale in terms nearly identical to how he describes an alien and invasive narrative force that causes the *Marmion* narrator to draw attention to his own separate and superior position within narrator-space, it is



because, perhaps without being consciously or fully aware of it, Scott understands that both moments function to similar ends. In each case, we feel the separation of narrator-spaces from the diegetic worlds they refer to and represent—that is, we feel the *failure* to establish a connection, and *hence* their separation, from the positions occupied by the objects of their narration.

The closest that Scott comes to directly acknowledging the importance of failing to establish a connection between narrators and the worlds they describe comes in the introductory verse epistle to Canto 2 where, after discussing the “mingled sentiment / ’Twixt resignation and content” that accompanies “musing on companions gone,” and remarking that “there is pleasure in this pain,” he thinks explicitly about how, for the character of the Palmer, such melancholy sweetness would be all but unthinkable: “him whose heart is ill at ease / Such peaceful solitudes displease” (*M*, 2.0). The Palmer, Scott makes clear,

loves to drown his bosom’s jar  
Amid the elemental war:  
*And my black Palmer’s choice had been*  
*Some ruder and more savage scene,*  
Like that which frowns round dark Loch-skene.  
There eagles scream from isle to shore;  
Down all the rocks the torrents roar;  
O’er the black waves incessant driven  
Dark mists infect the summer heaven;  
Through the rude barriers of the lake,

Away its hurrying waters break,  
Faster and whiter dash and curl,  
Till down yon dark abyss they hurl.  
Rises the fog-smoke white as snow,  
Thunders the viewless stream below,  
Diving, as if condemned to lave  
Some demon's subterranean cave,  
Who, prisoned by dark enchanter's sell,  
Shakes the dark rock with groan and yell.  
*And well that Palmer's form and mien*  
*Had suited with the stormy scene,*  
Just on the edge, straining his ken  
To view the bottom of the den,  
Where, deep deep down, and far within,  
Toils with rocks the roaring linn.

(*M*, 2.0, emphasis added)

Scott's nostalgic "peaceful solitude" is countered by the Palmer's "savage scene" of "elemental war," his "love of lonely rest" is "drown[ed]" by the Palmer's "black waves" that "infect the summer heaven." The distance between Scott and the characters of his story is more than one of emotional disposition—though obviously that difference is profound—but is also a function of different degrees of (subjective, historical) embeddedness in the worlds they each variously occupy. The Palmer is "suited" to a "stormy scene" of treachery, betrayal, violence, and obsession, while Scott the poet can at

best be sensitive to these wild states of mind—he is someone who mediates and represents these feelings as opposed to feeling them directly. By inviting the Palmer to comment upon the world of the tale’s frame, by giving direct representation to the feeling that they can have nothing to do with each other, Scott draws attention not simply to their separation, but to the idea that the separation is important, and that a condition of acknowledging the separation is the failure to overcome it. Rather than, as Wordsworth does, attempting to recreate the experience of “man speaking to men,” Scott attempts to demonstrate the absolute (historical, formal, generic) exteriority of narration to the world of the characters and plot that it mediates.

### **III. Closing the Gap: Narrative as Mastery in *The Lady of the Lake***

The remarkable success of *The Lady of the Lake* (1810)—Scott’s third, and by many considered to be his best narrative poem—marks both the highest point in his career as a poet, and also anticipates the beginning of his decline as a poet. As Scott remarks in the introduction that he composed for the poem in 1830:

Its success was so extraordinary as to induce me for the moment to conclude that I had at last fixed a nail in the proverbially inconstant wheel of Fortune, whose stability in behalf of an individual who had so boldly courted her favors for three successive times had not as yet been shaken. . . .

I conceived, however, that I held the distinguished situation I had obtained, however unworthily, rather like the champion of pugilism, on the condition of being always ready to show proofs of my skill, than in the

manner of the champion of chivalry, who performs his duties only on rare and solemn occasions. I was in any case conscious that I could not long hold a situation which the caprice rather than the judgment of the public had bestowed upon me, and preferred being deprived of my precedence by some more worthy rival, to sinking into contempt for my indolence, and losing my reputation by what Scottish lawyers call the *negative prescription*. Accordingly, those who choose to look at the Introduction to *Rokeby*, will be able to trace the steps by which I declined as a poet to figure as a novelist; as the ballad says, Queen Eleanor sunk at Charing Cross to rise again at Queenhithe.<sup>157</sup>

The “more worthy rival” he speaks of is Byron, whom he praises in even more glowing and self-disparaging terms in his 1830 introduction to *Rokeby*: there he calls Byron a “mighty and unexpected rival,” whose poetic gifts had a “great chance of . . . taking the wind out of my sails.” “There would have been little wisdom in measuring my force with so formidable an antagonist,” Scott writes, “and I was as likely to tire of playing the second fiddle in the concert, as my audience of hearing me”—and thus, though he doesn’t abandon poetry completely after Byron awoke to find himself famous, Scott does begin to focus more exclusively on developing his skills as a novelist.<sup>158</sup>

But, it will be my argument that it is the conditions that lead to Scott writing his most successful poem that, paradoxically, cause it to be less influential in the continuing formal development of the novel during the Romantic period. During the time he was composing *The Lady of the Lake*, Scott was also, through his silent (and clandestine) partnership in the Ballantyne publishing firm, exercising influence in nearly every aspect

of the business of publishing. Thus, as St. Clair notes, Scott was able to “achieve an ownership of the whole literary production and distribution process from author to reader, controlling or influencing the initial choice of subjects, the writing of the texts, the editing, the publishing, and the printing of the books, the reviewing in the local literary press, the adaptations for the theatre, and the putting on of the theatrical adaptations at the theatre in Edinburgh, which Scott also owned.”<sup>159</sup> It is against this background that Sutherland maintains that Scott emerges as “the completest author.” He calls this moment in Scott’s career a “fascinating experiment in professional writing”: Scott had managed, as perhaps no one had done before him and no one has ever done since, to “close all the gaps – or ‘gateways’ – across which literature habitually jumped or fell.” In short, “by 1810, the circuit was closed.”<sup>160</sup>

Scott’s unprecedented control in the literary marketplace—from composition to distribution—is reflected in the kind of narrative voice he constructs to tell the story of *The Lady of the Lake*. No longer does this narrative voice engage with problematic historical, social, and formal conditions, as the narrators had done in the *Lay* and in *Marmion*. Rather, Scott now employs a narrator who is uncomplicatedly confident about his own superiority, and, when required to by the plot, cedes his control of narrator-space without registering or causing any of the formal complications that has previously characterized such temporary reorientations of the narrating figure. In Section I I argued that the *Marmion* narrator eventually comes to realize his superior position in primary narrator-space, but, in *The Lady of the Lake*, there is no crisis that precipitates this realization. From the beginning, the print narrator exudes a sense of confidence that suggests a growing indifference to the significance of the relation between the various

kinds of narrating voices he mediates—their differences, in other words, are not felt to be as significant as their similarities, because they all must be mediated by print narration before they can be represented in the world of the story.

Now, while this narrative situation is interesting with respect to the kind of developments that I've been tracking in Scott's deployment of narrative voice in his previous poems, it is importantly a change that, I argue, diminishes this poem's ability to exert influence on the continuing development of the novel during the Romantic period. That's because, while *The Lady of the Lake* was sufficiently popular to continue exerting influence outside of its generic boundaries, it lacked the innovation at the level of narrative form that would have been necessary to affect other narrative genres. This new narrative voice, while mimicking Scott's own position of silent control, does not contribute anything new to the literary history of narrative form—certainly by 1810 it was a commonplace of narrators in novels to dwell uncomplicatedly outside the sphere of the story they represented. And, though the historical and formal relation between diegetic and extradiegetic narrators continues to structure the narrative of this poem, that relation is no longer determined by a formally-complex antagonism or variability so much as it is represented as being determined by a power structure that absolutely and without complication depends upon the capacities of print narration. In other words, the historical relation between oral and print narration can no longer be felt even by the difference that the absence orality makes to the practice of storytelling—it can only be felt in comparison to Scott's earlier poetry. By 1810, the formal volatility that I have argued characterizes *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* and *Marmion* has been tamed, controlled, and polished into an attractive and highly readable, if less formally interesting,

version of itself. Therefore, we may identify *The Lady of the Lake* as an end-point in one part of Scott's development of narrative form.

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The narrator of *The Lady of the Lake* begins the poem by addressing a world that has perhaps been most clearly presaged by *Marmion*'s repeated failures to establish a connection between an ancient world of embodied poetics and the modern world of print narration—that is, in a world where minstrelsy's presence in thought or poetic representation is predicated upon its disappearance at some point in the distant past:

Harp of the North! that mouldering long hast hung  
On the witch-elm that shades Saint Fillian's spring,  
And down the fitful breeze thy numbers flung,  
Till envious ivy did around thee cling,  
Muffling the verdant ringlet every string—  
O minstrel Harp, still must thine accents sleep?

.....

O, wake once more! how rude soe'r the hand  
That ventures o'er thy magic maze to stray;  
O, wake once more! though scarce my skill command  
Some feeble echoing of thine earlier lay:  
Though harsh and faint, and soon to die away,  
And all unworthy of thy nobler strain,

Yet if one heart throb higher at its sway

The wizard note has not been struck in vain.

Then silent be no more! Enchantress, wake again!<sup>161</sup>

As in the *Lay*, the poem begins with a harp that has been separated from its minstrel—but, in contrast to Scott's first poem, there no longer exist any minstrels whose voices could be paired with the harp. The narrator's address to the harp initially suggests that he might fill in the role of the minstrel, but there is no sense that he treats the problem of minstrelsy in the same way that the narrators in Scott's previous poems would. The figure of the minstrel is important to this narrator only for his *manual* relation to the harp—it is his *hand* (not voice) that coaxes "the wizard note" out of the "mouldering" harp—whereas the problem of minstrelsy for the narrators of the *Lay* and *Marmion* was focused on the loss of an *oral* form of narration that can only approximately be suggested in the medium of print. In fact, the narrator of *The Lady of the Lake* does not appear to be interested in the figure of the minstrel at all. Rather, his address is strictly focused on the sound of the harp—nowhere does he register the importance of (or the absence of) the human voice. This is a narrating figure whose media consciousness is either untroubled by the inability of print to capture the essence of orality, or who is so pleased with the prospect that his own hand (a metonym for writing) will awake "some feeble echoing of thine earlier lay" that he is incapable of acknowledging that the reason the harp hasn't been played in ages untold is because of the death of minstrelsy. Thus, rather than beginning *The Lady of the Lake* in a way that mimics the beginning of *Marmion*—by suggesting that an instability in the relation between narrative voices has been comfortably stabilized in the form of a hybrid narrating figure that encapsulates aspects



of both print narration and human embodiment—the narrator here stabilizes an old instability by being unaware of, or unmoved by, its importance. The problem of the loss of orality has ceased to occur to the narrator as problematic.

It may be useful to compare my reading of the narrative situation at the beginning of the poem with a reading offered by Nancy Moore Goslee of this same scene. She argues that the narrator undergoes a process of gradual empowerment, beginning in a position of relative weakness with respect to the “anarchic sources of imaginative energy” in poetry, and ending in a position of something like a monarch’s absolute authority.<sup>162</sup> In this sense, she argues, the narrator’s transition from relative weakness to strength is mirrored by that of one of the poem’s main characters—James Fitz-James, Scotland’s King James V in disguise—who begins the poem in a position of uncertain political authority with respect to the belligerent forces of Clan Alpine and their leader Roderick Dhu, and, after capturing Roderick Dhu and defeating the clan in battle, ends the poem in a position of power over the Highlanders. Goslee also argues that Scott uses two figures in the poem—the minstrel Allan-bane and the prophet Brian the Hermit—to comment on the limitations of his own poetic powers. Thus, she claims that “like the narrator at the opening of the poem, these two seem at times helpless before the uncontrollable sources of their own art.”<sup>163</sup> Allan-Bane, for example, is shown to be unable to exert control over his harp, which seems to be “tuned” by the “mightier hand” of political unrest in Scotland (*LL*, 2.7), and Brian the Hermit passively receives prophecy from supernatural sources that he cannot control. In Scott’s depiction of their relative powerlessness with respect to the sources of poetry (or prophecy), Goslee claims that Allan-bane and Brian the Hermit are “analogues of the poet.”<sup>164</sup> In short, she writes:

Scott's narrator undergoes an experience similar to the king's, a journey into territories he does not control. Beginning with doubts about his own ability to waken the "Harp of the North" and to find an audience, the modern minstrel confronts through the portraits of the two earlier bardic figures the anarchic sources of imaginative energy that threaten the ordering power of his art and yet cannot be excluded from it. Through that experience he can become more an "absolute master"; he too can enlarge and redefine his territory.<sup>165</sup>

While I agree that the way in which Scott represents the figures of the poets in *The Lady of the Lake* is in an important key to the theory of poetics that underlies the poem, my own approach is more focused on the way in which Scott makes *distinctions* between the situation of the "modern minstrel" and the conditions in which ancient minstrels thrived. Those differences, as I've argued, are suggested by the history of media change that they invoke—and, more importantly, are represented in narrator-space (that is, on a formal level) in a way that indicates Scott's interest in the relation between media history and narrative form. Thus, one of the constant concerns of Scott's poetic career—from the very first lines of the *Lay* to the introduction of *The Lady of the Lake*—is the fate of ancient, oral, and embodied poetics in an age of print mediation. As opposed to his diegetic poets, whose lives are as poetic they are political, Scott is interested in how the formal conditions of print narration seem to exclude the category of social integration that would make social concerns meaningful. But, by the time he is writing *The Lady of the Lake*, Scott appears no longer even to be interested in the formal relation between

medium and sociality, and is instead more occupied with the absolute and unassailable control possessed by his narrator.

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Once again, it is by tracking the way in which changes occur within narrator-space that we gain the clearest sense of the strength and control felt implicitly by the narrator of *The Lady of the Lake*. But, in this case, the significance of the action within narrator-space can only be understood in comparison to similar situations in Scott's previous two poems. For example, in the first canto, shortly after James Fitz-James crosses into the (seemingly enchanted) territory of Clan Alpine, he meets Ellen Douglas, the so-called "Lady of the Lake" (*LL*, 1.17), and charms her into leading him to the lodge where her family is housed, in near secret, under the protection of Roderick Dhu. After dining with Ellen and Roderick Dhu's mother, Ellen sings what she calls a "spell" and the narrator calls a "minstrel verse" to James, putting him into a deep sleep that is accompanied by vivid dreams (*LL*, 1.32). The song, marked as emanating from a source other than the primary narrator—both because it is typographically marked off under the title "Song" and because its rhythm and rhyme scheme differ from the narrator's—causes the narrator temporarily to cede his narrator-space to Ellen. When he reclaims his place in narrator-space, he provides penetrating access to the sleeping mind of James. In this way, the alterations in narrator-space can be seen to be approximately similar to the changes that occurred when the *Marmion* narrator ceded his narrator-space to Fitz-Eustace, only to return to see the thoughts of Marmion more clearly than any other human figure would be in a position to see them. But, the difference between that scene in *Marmion* and this scene in *The Lady of the Lake* is that the narrator now does not attempt to establish any

continuity between his position and that occupied by Ellen, nor does he erect a barrier between his perspective and the interiority of James only to immediately break that barrier down. This narrator calmly cedes his narrator-space, and calmly reclaims it, without, in the process, exhibiting any longing for a kind of narrative voice that he is not.

Even more notably, the narrator cedes his narrator-space to Allan-bane for eight long stanzas in the sixth canto (*LL*, 6.15-22), not merely allowing him to sing a song that is of secondary importance to the plot, but to serve as the primary narrator of the defeat of Clan Alpine by the forces of King James. Since Roderick Dhu was injured badly and captured before the battle, and therefore not able to witness its outcome, he relies on Allan-bane, who gains access to Roderick's cell at Stirling Castle, to explain to him what happened. It is important to note that the event represented in Allan-bane's song, "The Battle of Beal' an Duine" (*LL*, 6.15), though it is of primary interest to the reader and necessary for the resolution of the plot, is not represented anywhere else in the poem—Allan-bane's is the only narrative voice that is permitted to speak of it. And, tellingly, Roderick specifically asks Allan-bane to sing to him about the battle, not just because he wants to know what happened, but because he thinks that Allan-bane will be able to render the events lifelike with his expertise in the art of minstrelsy:

‘Free from thy minstrel-spirit glanced,  
Fling me the picture of the fight,  
When met my clan the Saxon might.  
*I'll listen, till my fancy hears*  
*The clang of swords, the crash of spears!*  
*These grates, these walls, shall vanish then*

*For the fair field of fighting men,  
And my free spirit burst away,  
As if it soared from battle fray'*

(*LL*, 6.14, emphasis added)

Roderick acknowledges what the primary narrator has not bothered to worry about—namely, that there is something unique and desirable about the experience of storytelling when it originates in a “minstrel-spirit.” It will be powerful enough, he expects, to make “these walls” of his jail (and eventual death) cell feel as if they have “vanish[ed],” replaced by the “soar[ing]” perspective of another’s story. Thus, it is not as if the importance of live minstrelsy has been displaced from the conceptual lexicon of *The Lady of the Lake*, but rather that the narrator is capable of acknowledging it, if only by way of another character’s mediated perspective, without therefore feeling threatened by its unique qualities, or displaying any kind of anxiety about its own separate, print-based, position. The power of minstrelsy is felt by Scott, and the narrative voice that reflects his own thinking on this matter, to be less troublesome, less formally confusing than in his previous two poems—now it is fully and casually contained by the master narrative without leaving any trace of its effects on that narrative’s imaginative structure. This is why the narrator can yield his narrator-space for a long stretch of time, and allow Allansbane to represent a significant moment in the narrative action without interrupting him or summarizing his story (as in *Marmion*): because, finally, the narrator’s position is tacitly understood to be the one on which all of this representation depends.

When Sutherland speaks of the way in which, during the time that he was composing *The Lady of the Lake*, Scott was able to “close all the gaps – or ‘gateways’ –

across which literature habitually jumped or fell,” he makes a point that is as applicable to the formal construction of narrative voice as it is to the business of books. I have marked instances in Scott’s poetry where the sense of a gap between different kinds of narrative voices caused a noticeable disturbance in the imaginative structure of the poem, but, by 1810, these gaps are noticeable only to the extent that we keep Scott’s earlier poetry in mind as we read—now the differences between different kinds of narrative voice are acknowledged, but ultimately felt to be less significant than the similar way in which they are dependent, both formally and historically, on the mediating perspective of the print narrator. We are able to experience the significance of this new kind of unproblematic master narrative very clearly in the gorgeous depiction of the stag hunt that famously opens *The Lady of the Lake*. Here, the print narrator is repeatedly shown to be able to occupy a variety of limited perspectives without therefore being in any way limited by them. Thus, he can see from the perspective of place:

With hark and whoop and wild halloo,  
No rest Benvoirlich’s echoes knew.

(*LL*, 1.3)

—of many animals:

The falcon, from her cairn on high,  
Cast on the rout [the hunt] a wondering eye,  
Till far beyond her piercing ken  
The hurricane had swept the glen.  
Faint, and more faint, its failing din  
Returned from the cavern, cliff, and linn,

And silence settled, wide, and still,  
On the lone wood and mighty hill.

(*LL*, 1.3)

With anxious eye he [the stag] wandered o'er  
Mountain and meadow, moss and moor,  
And pondered refuge from his toil

.....

Fresh vigor with the hope returned,  
With flying foot the heath he spurned,  
Held westward with unwearied race,  
And left behind the panting chase.

(*LL*, 1.5)

—and, finally, from the lead huntsman (whom we eventually discover to be James Fitz-James) himself:

The rocky summits, split and rent,  
Formed turret, dome, or battlement,  
Or seemed fantastically set  
With cupola or minaret,  
Wild crests as pagod every decked,  
Or mosque of Eastern architect.  
Now were these earth-born castles bare,  
Nor lacked they many a banner fair;

For from their shivered brows displayed,  
Far o'er *the unfathomable glade*.  
All twinkling with the dewdrop sheen.  
The brier-rose fell in streamers green,  
And creeping shrubs of thousand dyes  
Waved in the west-wind's summer sighs.

.....  
*The wanderer's eye could barely view*  
*The summer heaven's delicious blue;*  
*So wondrous wild, the whole might seem*  
*The scenery of a fairy dream.*

(*LL*, 1.11-12, emphasis added)

In each of these descriptions, the figures whose perceptions we are momentarily given access to are shown to be limited by their emplacement in a defined physical space. The narrator reports from the perspective of the falcon only long enough to watch as the hunt comes into its view, and gradually fades out of it—he then smoothly jumps to the perspective of the stag, and then to James, when the narration of the scene seems to call for it. His master-perspective is capable of reporting from a variety of limited views without feeling as if their differences (from himself, from each other) pose any kind of challenge to his ability to represent them.

More tellingly, the narrator is shown to grasp aspects of the total picture that depend, specifically, on his freedom from human aesthetic or conceptual limitations.



James experiences the Highland scene as an “unfathomable glade,” and his “eye could barely view / The summer heaven’s delicious blue.” Indeed, the only way he has of understanding the “rocky summits, split and rent” is to compare them to “turret, dome, or battlement,” or to Eastern architecture. By showing the mind of James in the process of incompletely or only approximately perceiving the grandeur of nature, the narrator demonstrates his ability to see James in the act of seeing and, simultaneously, to see more than James sees. This is not a position that is entirely new to Scott’s narrators—after all, they have repeatedly been distinguished by their ability to perceive aspects of a scene that would not be available to anyone who was physically embodied in it. But, what is new about this narrator’s exclusive access is not just his ability to perceive interior thoughts as easily as he sees exterior action, but that the totality of all objects—including private human perspectives, *as well as* physical aspects of a scene that occur on a scale larger than the human mind is capable of digesting—is now easily within his grasp. The act of narration now appears to be an act of total mastery.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### “The Custom of Storytellers”: Fielding, *Waverley*, and Austen

These circumstances will serve to explain such points of our narrative as, according to the custom of storytellers, we deemed it fit to leave unexplained, for the purpose of exciting the reader’s curiosity.

Walter Scott, *Waverley*

### Introduction: Mapping Generic Interrelation

Jane Millgate has argued that Scott’s tendency to use frame structures in his narrative poetry derives from the “editorial strategies” he first employed as a scholarly, contextualizing tool in his work as an editor of ballad collections.<sup>166</sup> She writes that

It is true that the *Lay*, *Marmion*, and *The Lady of the Lake* do not present the reader with that counterpointing of formal English prose against older Scottish poetry which characterizes the *Minstrelsy*, but by working a series of variations on the framework transition Scott nevertheless retains in these three poems something of the foregrounding effect previously achieved by embedding ballads in prose commentary. He moves from the old minstrel of the *Lay* through the extended modern verse epistles of *Marmion* to the briefer exercises in Spenserian verse used to introduce the cantos of *The Lady of the Lake*. And in each case the framework, ostensibly employed to establish connections with the actual world of the poem, serves to mark off as literary artefact the text it encompasses.<sup>167</sup>

Millgate acknowledges implicitly what I developed in the last chapter—namely, that Scott’s use of narrative form to mark the significance of the difference between past and present diminishes over the course of his first three poems. Hence, by the time he is writing *The Lady of the Lake*, this contrast is felt only to the extent that “the briefer exercises in Spenserian verse used to introduce the cantos” register in the reader’s experience as “mark[ing] off” the separation between past and present. Without disagreeing with Millgate about the effects of such a subtle marker of difference, we can surely say that those effects are easier to ignore, or to mistake, than the disturbances at the level of narrative form that characterized Scott’s earlier, more vexed, experiments in the relation between the present of print mediation and the past of poetic orality.

But these “editorial strategies” reemerge as an important influence on Scott as he develops a narrative structure for *Waverley*. As I discussed in Chapter One, even as *Waverley*’s narrator thinks and performs small but important tasks of narrative description in bits of excerpted poetry, he takes unusual pains to mark the singing of poetry (and the experience of listening to it) as substantially different from the experience of reading it on the page. So, to briefly revisit an example from my earlier discussion, Rose Bradwardine’s singing of “St. Swithin’s Chair” appears on the page in measured, lineated quatrains, centered under a title, and specifically marked by the narrator as being “destitute of . . . [the] advantages” that Rose’s voice bestows on the words. Indeed, the reader doesn’t even receive an accurate transcription of Rose’s song, since the print version has been “somewhat corrected” by *Waverley*. Thus, Scott’s narrator attempts not only to make the difference between reading “St. Swithin’s Chair” on the page and hearing it live roughly equivalent to the difference between reading it in a ballad

collection (where “correct[ions]” were common) and receiving it from its oral source. He also wants to draw attention to the importance of that difference.

The reader is able (or compelled) to feel his distance from the experience of orality as coincident with his experience of reading a novel, and this is achieved as a result of a hybridity in the structure of Scott’s narrator—he is figured both as an editor, and as the integrating consciousness who weaves together these various sources of evidence (oral, transcribed, epistolary, overheard) into a coherent story. In *Waverley*, therefore, Scott’s facility with and interest in “editorial strategies” play an essential role not just in the construction of the narrative voice, but in the way the narrator presents himself as a kind of scholarly editor. More emphatically than in Scott’s earlier experiments in narrative form, the editor-function and the narrator-function are now drawn into such close proximity with each other that they are virtually indistinguishable from one another. Telling the story that is *Waverley* and telling the story of the telling of *Waverley* are made to be two sides of the same narrative coin.

The return and integration of the editor-function in Scott’s first novel provides an excellent test case for tracking the movement of narrative form as it is passed from innovator to innovator, from genre to genre, accumulating new complexities and valences (even as it sheds old ones) in the process. That’s because, the precise form that Scott’s narrator takes in *Waverley* bears an obvious mark of influence from Henry Fielding’s intrusive narrators in *Joseph Andrews* and especially *Tom Jones*. Thus, Scott’s development of narrative form in *Waverley* draws both upon the editorial and media-theoretical concerns that animate and connect his entire literary career—from poet to novelist—as well as a more expansive set of concerns and questions about novelistic

representation that are prominently featured in the work of Fielding. In this chapter, therefore, I attempt to detail how the form of the *Waverley* narrator is determined not just by Scott's lifelong interest in "editorial strategies," but also by the way those interests are mediated by Fielding's example.

As will quickly become clear, however, the already-complex task of tracing the process by which Scott inherits and innovates upon the intrusive narrative voice of Fielding's novels becomes even more complicated by the important fact that Scott's engagement with Fielding's narrator does not begin when he turns to write novels, but in fact extends at least as far back as his writing of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. Indeed, while Scott's formal interests appear always, in some way, to be connected with those of Fielding, the precise nature of that connection changes throughout Scott's career as his own formal interests change. Thus, getting clear on the significance of how Scott channels the influence of Fielding in *Waverley* will require establishing three related formal-historical developments:

- (1) How Scott's narrative voice in his poetry is in part indebted to Fielding's narrative voice;
- (2) How Scott's narrative voice in his novels is in part indebted to Fielding's narrative voice;
- (3) How Scott's engagement with Fielding changes from his poetry to his novels. What was it about Fielding that was useful to Scott when he was writing poetry, and why was it no longer useful to him when he was writing novels?

I will argue that while the intrinsic imaginative structure of the variable positions assumed by Fielding's narrator provided Scott with a template for his enrichment of narrator-space, in which different narrative positions are associated with different forms of media-historical relevance, it was the self-regarding narrative theorization of Fielding's narrator that was most useful for Scott as he worked out, in the process of writing *Waverley*, the best way to be a narrator in a novel. One of the characteristic features of Fielding's narrator is his regular intrusion into his own story, in the midst of telling it, to provide (oftentimes humorous) theoretical justifications for his decision to tell the story in just such a way—as opposed to any other way. This particular manifestation of narratorial intrusiveness—distinct, as I'll argue, from the variability of narrative positions displayed by the same narrator—provides Scott with a template for developing a running account (what I call a *second story*), not just of the decisions, but more interestingly of the uncertainties that precipitate the telling his story in one way or the other. Scott's indecision appears as a scholar's indecision (part of a search for accuracy and objectivity) as well as a novice's indecision (uncertainty about how a narrative in the novel should proceed). And both forms of indecisiveness have the effect of introducing (or driving) distance between the reader and the story, by contrast with the self-certainty of Fielding's narrator which produces something like the opposite effect. Thus, while the *Waverley* narrator is locatable on a continuum with Fielding's narrator, the way that Scott inherits and innovates upon that narrator—using him to mark the telling of the story as a process that necessarily separates the reader and the narrator from the world of the story—is strongly influenced by an approach to narrative form that Scott began working on in his poetry (see Chapters Two and Three).

<b>Fielding's Intrusive Narrator</b>	<b>In Scott's...</b>	<b>Inherited/Innovated in Developing...</b>
<b>Wild Variability</b>	<b>Poetry</b>	<b>Narrator-Space</b>
<b>Self-Regarding Narrative Theorist</b>	<b>Novels</b>	<b>Second Story</b>

*Figure 4.1*

Finally, by clarifying how Scott's literary career is characterized by a gradual development in his own formal interests, which is reflected in his shifting formal relationship to Fielding, I will offer an account of the novelistic posterity of Scott's poetic influence that is not a part of, nor mediated by, his novelistic influence. Specifically, I argue that Jane Austen's distinctive deployment of free indirect discourse is indebted to the way in which Scott uses narrative form in his poetry to analyze historical outsiders and narrative impersonality. By detailing the relation between Fielding and Scott, Scott's poetry and Scott's novels, and Scott's poetry and Austen's novels, I hope to broadly suggest the extent to which literary history can be made up of a complex series of inheritances and innovations that are constrained in part by the structure of the earlier innovation, in part by the author's creativity and interests, and in part by extra-literary

market pressures that manifest as literary influence. I argue, in short, that we can only make sense of Austen's achievement in the form of the novel by giving due credit to the innovations and influence of Scott's poetry.

### **Cross-Generic Influence in Literary History (Path 1): Fielding and Scott**

My claim that Scott is the generic heir of Fielding might at first glance appear to be too obvious to be worth remarking. After all, Fielding was an important influence on the developing novel in general. Many of his idiosyncratic stylistic choices were absorbed into the institution of the novel itself, so that while Fielding himself might have chosen to write his novels in another way, novelists writing after him may not even grasp the extent to which their assumptions about what a novel is or how it ought to be written are conditioned by Fielding's example. In *Waverley*, however, we see Scott thinking explicitly about the relation between his novel and those of Fielding. Consider, for example, this telling moment when the *Waverley* narrator refers to *Tom Jones* to explain a scene in his own story:

The sapient Partridge says, that one man with a pistol is equal to a hundred unarmed, because, though he can shoot but one of the multitude, yet no one knows but that he himself may be that luckless individual. (*W*, 239)

While modern critical editions of *Waverley* draw the reader's attention to Scott's invocation of *Tom Jones*, Scott apparently felt no such need to bring his own readers up to speed. What is so interesting about this casual assumption of familiarity with the works of Fielding is that it functions in this scene as a kind of meta-commentary on the way in which plot and action tend to be generated within any novel. The *Waverley* narrator



invokes Fielding here to clarify Waverley's situation—he is on the verge of being taken prisoner under suspicion of treason, and he pulls his gun in an attempt to intimidate a mob of Cairnvreckan villagers long enough to escape—but, as he does so, he feels the need to explain why what “the sapient Partridge” says should happen in these situations isn't, in fact, what occurs in this particular situation: “The *levy en masse* of Cairnvreckan *would therefore have given way* . . . had not the Vulcan of the village . . . rushed at [Waverley] with the red-hot bar of iron” (*W*, 239, emphasis added). Had not one or two details about this scene been unexpectedly atypical, the narrator intimates, it would have unfolded in the manner predicted by Partridge. Thus, Fielding does not simply provide a norm of judgment, but, more deeply, a norm of expectation—in readers and writers alike. Rather than silently accepting this as a fact, however, Scott makes his awareness of his relation to Fielding an explicit part of the narrating of his own novel. Another way of saying this is that Fielding's intrusive narrator is refigured in this moment in *Waverley* as a narrator who intrudes to think about Fielding.

As I've already indicated, it appears that Scott was thinking about Fielding's example for much of his literary career. His explicit citation in *Waverley* is new, but his engagement with his narrative form is not. Indeed, it requires only a quick comparative survey to see that Scott's poems pay as much explicit attention to their poetic narrators as Fielding's novels do to their novelistic narrator, and, more interestingly, that the *precise* variations in narrative voice and position in Scott's poetry are drawn from a nearly-identical set of signature variations in narrative voice and position in Fielding's novels. For example, Fielding's narrators regularly interrupt the story in order to comment upon it in their own voice and to draw attention to the difference between what they know and

what the audience can at that moment know. A typical chapter in *Joseph Andrews*, titled “What passed between the Lady and Mrs. *Slipslop*, in which we prophesy there are some Strokes which every one will not truly comprehend at first reading,” is only one example.<sup>168</sup> This kind of bragging narratorial privilege is also on display in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, when the minstrel interrupts his own tale in the middle of a scene in which two lovers are temporarily reunited, to warn the ladies of his audience that his is not a tale of love:

And now, fair dames, methinks I see  
You listen to my minstrelsy;  
Your waving locks ye backward throw,  
And sidelong bend your necks of snow.  
Ye ween to hear a melting tale  
Of two true lovers in a dale;  
And how the knight, with tender fire  
To paint his faithful passion strove,  
Swore he might at her feet expire,  
But never, never cease to love;

.....

Alas! fair dames, your hopes are vain!  
My harp has lost the enchanting strain;  
Its lightness would my age reprove:  
My hairs are gray, my limbs are old,

My heart is dead, my veins are cold:

I may not, must not, sing of love.

(*L*, 2.29-30)

While Fielding's narrator is more playful than Scott's self-pitying melancholic narrator, the effect is very nearly the same: that is, both narrators address their audiences directly to draw attention, on the one hand, to their own centrality in determining the content of the story, and, on the other hand, to emphasize the audience's inability to predict the future shape of the story based on what seems obvious about it in the present.

Complicating this latter point is that narrators in the works of both Fielding and Scott do not always appear to occupy a position of privileged knowledge and access. Indeed, their narrators are strikingly similar in the way that they are depicted as occupying constantly *shifting* levels of narrative access. In Fielding's novels, for example, the narrator will variously be depicted

(1) as not having any special access to the details of the story—occupying neither the privileged perspective of Fielding (the creator) nor the godlike position of an omniscient narrator;

(2) as having special access to the action of an otherwise private scene, but without being equipped with the kind of penetrative seeing that would allow him to choose between opposed interpretations of the mental states of the characters in that scene; and, finally,

(3) as being able to see so penetratively into the psychology of his characters that he can see things that even they are not yet able to see.

Thus, in *Joseph Andrews*, shortly after Joseph is reunited with his beloved Fanny Goodwill, the narrator momentarily occupies something like the severely limited editor-function more familiar to epistolary fiction (or the position of scholarly editor that the epistolary narrator mimics):

(1) “Indeed, I have been often assured by both, that they spent these Hours in a most delightful Conversation: but as I never could prevail on either to relate it, so I cannot communicate it to the Reader.”<sup>169</sup>

Compare with:

(1') The last minstrel's “I cannot tell how the truth may be; / I say the tale as 'twas said to me.”

Then, in *Tom Jones*, the narrator very often draws a distinction between how much he *does* know (which is of course more than the reader) and how much *there is* to know:

(2) “Whether Partridge repented or not, according to Allworthy's advice, is not so apparent.”<sup>170</sup>

Compare with:

(2') The *Marmion* narrator's initial refusal to “scan” Marmion's thoughts, instead only guessing, and hinting strongly, at “their import.”

And, finally,

(3) Fielding's narrator can also, apparently with ease, see that Sophia Western is falling in love with Tom Jones even before she knows it.

Compare with:

(3') The same scene in *Marmion*, when the narrator tracks the movement of Marmion's thoughts as they pass from unconsciousness to consciousness.

As the imaginative structure within which the narrator takes form changes, so too does the reader's imaginative experience of the story change. Rather than projecting one unified kind of imaginative access, the narrators of both Fielding and Scott are characterized by the way in which they project various, and even inconsistently situated, pictures of the diegetic realm to which only they have access.

But, if each of these variations in the narrative voice in Fielding's novels maps onto the kinds of variations I was describing in chapters Two and Three about the narrative voices in Scott's poetry, the significant difference between them is the principle of aesthetic integration employed by each author in the formation of this narrative fluidity or instability. Thus, even though Fielding's narrator can claim at one point that he is "not possessed of any touchstone which can distinguish the true from the false" (*TJ*, 53) in a way that seems directly connected to the last minstrel's hedging that "I cannot tell how the truth may be; / I say the tale as 'twas said to me," the imaginative complexity that these narrative statements engender are in the service of quite different kinds of self-consciously new writing.

In Fielding, it would be hard to say that the particular variations in his narrative voice have any deliberate relation to each other. Rather, each of the narrator's variable appearances or intrusions in the story would seem to be a function of a larger effect that Fielding wants to produce for his readers. Writing about this effect, R. S. Crane has argued that, while the narrator of *Tom Jones* "perhaps intrudes too much in a purely ornamental way," the intrusions are nonetheless responsible for engendering in the reader a feeling that the narrator is

a man we can trust, who knows the whole story and still is not deeply concerned; one who understands the difference between good men and bad and who can yet speak with amused indulgence of the first, knowing how prone they are to weakness of intellect, and with urbane scorn, rather than indignation, of the second, knowing that most of them, too, are fools. This combination of sympathetic moral feeling with ironical detachment is bound to influence our expectations from the first, and to the extent that it does so, we tend to anticipate the coming troubles with no more than comic fear.<sup>171</sup>

Writing ten years later, Wayne Booth develops Crane's analysis of the kind of intimacy that Fielding's narrator generates with the reader:

If we read straight through all of the seemingly gratuitous appearances by the narrator . . . we discover a running account of a growing intimacy between the narrator and the reader, an account with a kind of plot of its own and a separate denouement. . . . In *Tom Jones*, the "plot" of our relationship with Fielding-as-narrator has no similarity to the story of Tom.

There is no complication, not even any sequence except for the gradually increasing familiarity and intimacy leading to farewell. And much of what we admire or enjoy in the narrator is in most respects quite different from what we enjoy in his hero.

Yet somehow a genuine harmony of the two dramatized elements is produced.<sup>172</sup>

What Crane and Booth both affirm, therefore, is that the varied intrusions of the narrator are integral for the creation of an emotional and moral continuity between his own position and that of the characters and actions he narrates, as well as between his reader and his story. Though his “purely ornamental” intrusions create multiple formal layers that may appear to be separable from each other, they nonetheless produce a “genuine harmony” which allows the reader to “trust” the narrator and therefore to feel as if the story will not violate our expectations of rewarded virtue.<sup>173</sup>

In Scott’s poetry, on the other hand, the variations in narrative voice have a very different relation to each other, and this is partially a result of the vexed history of genre and medium that they invoke and theorize. As I’ve already argued, much of what we see in the construction of narrative voice in Scott’s poetry is not entirely new—the variations that characterize it are, aside from being rendered in verse, quite similar to what we see in Fielding. But, a crucial difference between Fielding and Scott is that Scott deliberately uses his narrators to invoke the possibility of an intimacy and continuity that inevitably fails to be realized. That is, by installing narrative variability and intrusiveness in a system where different narrative positions are associated with different epochs in the literary and media history that it theorizes—in short, in his enrichment of narrator-

space—Scott complicates and innovates upon a narrative structure that he inherited from Fielding. I argue, therefore, that what we see in Scott’s poetry is the repurposing of an already-existent formal structure so that it can enter into an explanatory relationship with specific media-historical and cultural circumstances that would not have been of interest to Fielding. If anything, Fielding’s narrator comes close to the position of Wordsworth’s “man speaking to men,” whereas Scott’s poetic narrator creates the experience of disjunction or disturbance, of the impossibility of a connection between different narrative voices despite an obvious desire to make such a connection. And even when Scott’s narrator ceases to be concerned about the lack of connection between his position and the world in which he narrates—as in *The Lady of the Lake*—that lack of concern is merely replaced by a casual assumption of superiority over that world. In other words, Scott’s poetry never stops reminding the reader of the absolute separation between narrator-space and the space of the story.

When Scott turns to write novels, however, he has already become less interested in the use of narrator-space, and therefore his relationship to Fielding changes in a significant way. I argued earlier that Scott develops and enriches narrator-space in his poetry based in part on the formal antagonism between intrusive narrators and their protagonists in the eighteenth-century novel. Scott repurposes that antagonism by using it to orient the relationship between different kinds of historicized narrator positions, and as a result he is able to use narrator-space as a way of exploring the effects of the loss of orality in the age of print. But, even as the representation of Rose Bradwardine’s and Flora Mac-Ivor’s songs in *Waverley* suggest that Scott never stops thinking about the relation between orality and its remediation in print, that tension loses its urgency when



he is writing novels. This is partially a result, as I argued earlier, of Scott's gradual strengthening of the print narrator's position in narrator-space, and the consequent stabilization of its relation to other forms of narration. But, it also no doubt has to do with the *novelty* of novel-writing in the literary- and media-historical scheme of things. By the time Scott is writing *Waverley*, "the novel" as a simple abstraction is still less than a hundred years old. In writing a narrative poem, Scott felt compelled to think about the fundamental and culturally significant differences between the live singing of a poem in an age of primary orality and the writing of a poem for an age of print readership. But there was no corresponding media-historical problematic for Scott to work through in the construction of a narrative voice for his novel—the only way that there ever *had* been to narrate a novel is by way of a print narrator. Thus, the use of narrator-space as a site of contested narratorial agency is all but forgotten in the narrative form of *Waverley*.

Instead, what we see in *Waverley* is a use of Fielding's narrative style that is both more recognizably Fieldingesque, and, at the same time, much more aware of itself as an incorporation of Fielding's own narrative quirks. Thus, when the narrator in *Tom Jones* remarks that

Here I question not but the reader will be surprised at our long taciturnity  
as to this matter . . . since we have hitherto not dropped a hint of [it];<sup>174</sup>

it sounds remarkably similar to the *Waverley* narrator's theory of "the custom of storytellers" that he describes towards the end of the novel:

These circumstances will serve to explain such points of our narrative as,  
according to the custom of storytellers, we deemed it fit to leave  
unexplained, for the purpose of exciting the reader's curiosity. (*W*, 450)

And, we see that Fielding's unique approach to suspended possibilities in interpretation—

Whether cold, shame or the persuasions of Mr Jones prevailed most on

Mrs Waters, *I will not determine...* (*TJ*, 438, emphasis added)

—finds its analogue in *Waverley*:

*I know not whether* it was by the “merest accident in the world,” . . . *or*

*whether* it was from a conformity of tastes, that Miss Cecilia more than

once crossed Edward in his favourite walks through Waverley-Chase. (*W*,

56 emphasis added)

*I know not whether*, like the champion of an old ballad,

His heart was all on honour bent

He could not stoop to love;

No lady in the land had power

His frozen heart to move;

*or whether* the deep and flaming bars of embroidered gold which now

fenced his breast, defied the artillery of Cecilia's eyes; but every arrow

was launched at him in vain. (*W*, 62, emphasis added)

The obvious stylistic imitation of these examples belies a deeper intellectual engagement with Fielding's own questions about the techniques of narration as such. Rather than using the intrusiveness of the narrator, his jealously guarded position of intellectual authority, and his extreme variability as a template for a new formal model—as in the development of narrator-space for his poetry—Scott's *Waverley* narrator shows himself (or is shown) in the act of thinking about narrative and narrative form in a way that is

recognizably similar to the way Fielding's narrator thought about these same questions. That's because, while "the custom of storytellers" has been at the center of Scott's thought for his entire literary career, its precise features are importantly altered when he moves from writing poetry (in part about the media history of poetry) to writing novels. The custom of *novelistic* storytelling is a literary-historical category that originates in part in the way that Fielding's narrator thinks out loud about novelistic storytelling. Thus, although strategically withholding details about the plot is not new to Scott (it's an important part of *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake*), using the position of the narrator to talk about the purpose of such withholdings *is* new. And although Scott the poet is a subtle manipulator of narrative positions that variably provide or block access to private scenes or private thoughts, using the position of the narrator to mark multiple possible interpretations of a single scene appears for the first time in his novels.

Following Wayne Booth, who argues that the "sheer overflowing narrative exuberance" of Fielding's narrator amounts to "a dramatic rendering of a relationship with the author's 'second self,'" I propose that Scott's original development in his novels of what he inherits from Fielding can be located in the way that he uses his narrator to render a *second story*.<sup>175</sup> But, rather than being in the service of generating a relationship between reader and author, the *Waverley* narrator's second story is only about the process of writing the story of *Waverley*. Moreover, while it is clear that the role of Fielding as an originator of novelistic storytelling looms large in this intrusive aspect of narrative form in *Waverley*, it is equally clear that Scott's own individual interests in, and developments of, the "editorial strategies" spoken of by Millgate play an important role as well. That is, the *Waverley* narrator's second story provides an ongoing record of the choices that lead

him to tell the story of *Waverley* in just such a way (as opposed to any other way), and in this sense we can see a re-emergence and re-integration—as part of the act of storytelling itself—of the function of the explanatory footnotes that Scott used repeatedly throughout his career as an editor of ballad collections and as a poet who drew on records of Scotland’s legendary past. Millgate claims that “the desire to frame and contextualize” is, with Scott, “intrinsic to the working of the creative impulse itself.” She argues, therefore, for a general continuity between Scott’s poetry and novels:

The external structures of Scott’s poems and novels habitually enact a process of transition and mediation, but the effect created is curiously double, drawing the reader into the world of the poem even while continually reminding him of its fictionality.<sup>176</sup>

While I agree with Millgate about the effects of the frame structures in Scott’s writing, I think there is an important difference between how they take form in his poetry and how they take form in *Waverley*. In the poems, the frame devices only draw attention to themselves at the beginning and end of each canto. Scott is quite good at using variations in his poetic narrative voices to mark the intrusion of outsider forms of mediation and narration, but, in the writing of *Waverley* he is able to be much more direct about the continuous presence and function of the editor-narrator’s mind whose decisions determine, frame, and are ultimately an integral part of, the primary story itself.

One of the unique features of *Waverley*’s second story is the way in which it is occasionally rendered in a tone so conversational as to draw attention to its own difference or separation from the story it is conveying. We see this, for example, when

the narrator casually interjects something that he thinks he ought to have said earlier, but only just now—in the moment of telling—remembers:

*I ought to have said* that Edward, when he sent to Dundee for the books before mentioned, had applied for, and received permission, extending his leave of absence. (*W*, 122, emphasis added)

*I should forget* Alice's proudest ornament, *were I to omit* mentioning a pair of gold ear-rings, and a golden rosary, which her father (for she was the daughter of Donald Bean Lean) had brought from France, the plunder, probably, of some battle or storm. (*W*, 146, emphasis added)

The way in which the narrator marks himself as suddenly remembering to represent a detail that had nearly eluded his attention results in a fairly complex narrative effect. For, it is clear that the author (that is, Scott) could take his own “ought” seriously and rewrite what he had already written, so that the feeling that he “ought” to have mentioned something sooner would simply result in its actually appearing sooner in the final draft of the narrative. Instead, he chooses to have his narrator remember that he “ought” to have *said* something, and in this sense we see that the intrinsic imaginative structure of these moments results in something like the experience of listening to someone speak to you, live, in person (or, perhaps it is closer to the effect created by an audio recording of the live telling of a story). As Walter J. Ong writes, the most basic difference between language in writing and language in audible speech is that “sound exists only when it is going out of existence. It is not simply perishable but essentially evanescent, and it is sensed as evanescent.”<sup>177</sup> So, while a writer can revise his writing to reflect his sense of

the proper order of things, a speaker can only ever restate what he thinks ought to have been said earlier. The reader is made to experience the sense that something *should* have been said earlier, as opposed to the experience of actually encountering it earlier in the narrative. Rather, therefore, than experiencing the story with a kind of imaginative immediacy, the reader experiences the *telling* of the story as an integral part of the story itself.

In addition to representing real-time revisions of his own story, the *Waverley* narrator also draws attention to what he *doesn't* represent. Frequently, this is in the service of efficient storytelling—rather than representing every minute detail, the narrator represents just as much as he thinks the reader needs to know, and then moves on to other pertinent details:

Having thus touched upon the leading principle of Flora's character, I may dismiss the rest more lightly. (*W*, 169)

Having been so minute with respect to the diversions of Tully-Veolan, on the first days of Edward's arrival, for the purpose of introducing its inmates to the reader's acquaintance, it becomes less necessary to trace the progress of his intercourse with the same accuracy. (*W*, 117-118)

Additionally, the narrator often suppresses the representation of details either as a courtesy to his reader, who he believes would be annoyed with or uninterested in what he leaves out. Thus, the loquacious Baron is frequently reined in (by contrast with Miss Bates in *Emma*, who never is):

The Baron justified himself at greater length than I choose to repeat. (*W*, 116)

The Baron's story was short, when divested of the adages and commonplaces, Latin, English, and Scotch, with which erudition garnished it. (*W*, 437)

And, when Old Janet informs Waverley that it was Rose Bradwardine who was responsible for arranging the dangerous rescue mission to extract him from the grips of The Gifted Gilfillan and certain persecution in the Hanoverian stronghold of Stirling Castle, the narrator excuses himself from representing Waverley's thoughts as such:

Never did music sound sweeter to an amateur, than the drowsy tautology, with which Old Janet detailed every circumstance, thrilled upon the ears of Waverley. But my reader is not a lover, and I must spare his patience, by attempting to condense within reasonable compass the narrative which old Janet spread through a harangue of nearly two hours. (*W*, 445)

The narrator makes a similar move when Rose, her father, and Waverley are all reunited after a long separation:

We shall not attempt to describe the meeting of the father and daughter – loving each other so affectionately, and separated under such perilous circumstances. Still less shall we attempt to analyze the deep blush of Rose at receiving the compliments of Waverley, or stop to inquire whether she had any curiosity respecting the particular cause of his journey to Scotland at that period. We shall not even trouble the reader with the

humdrum details of a courtship Sixty Years since. It is enough to say, that under so strict a martinet as the Baron all things were conducted in due form. . . .

My fair readers will judge for themselves; but, for my part, I cannot conceive how so important an affair could be communicated in so short a space of time; - at least, it certainly took a full hour in the Baron's mode of conveying it. (*W*, 461)

Again, each of these narrative intrusions make explicit the kinds of decisions about composition that must be made in the telling of any story—what to represent at great detail, what to summarize, and what to skip over entirely—but which most narrators and authors are content to leave unvoiced.

The narrator's second story also features regular meditations not just on what he will or won't represent, but the generic significance of such decisions. Early in the novel, for example, the narrator apologizes for his lengthy exposition of the situation of Tory and Whig politics, and the dispute between the Hanovers and the Stuarts that took place during the time in which *Waverley* takes place. He explains that he has to include these perhaps tedious details because

My plan requires that I should explain the motives on which its action proceeded; and these motives necessarily arose from the feelings, prejudices, and parties of the time. (*W*, 53)

But, he wants to make it equally clear that

My intention is not to follow the steps of that inimitable author [Cervantes], in describing such total perversion of intellect as



misconstrues the objects actually presented to the senses, but that more common aberration from sound judgment, which apprehends occurrences indeed in their reality, but communicates to them a tincture of its own tone and colouring. (*W*, 55)

And, finally, the narrator offers this explanation for *not* providing a detailed account of the military movements in the Jacobite Uprising:

It is not our purpose to intrude upon the province of history. (*W*, 389)

Thus, like Fielding's narrator in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, the *Waverley* narrator regularly thinks out loud about the unique form that his storytelling takes and ought to take. But, rather than confining these discussions mostly to the introductory chapters that appear before each new volume of the novel—as Fielding does—Scott's narrator continuously interlards the primary story that is *Waverley* with the details of the second story that is the telling of *Waverley*.

Each of these instances of the editorial second story in *Waverley* produces an approximately similar effect. That is, in each case the reader is not just made aware of the companionable presence of the narrator, but, more complexly, is made to experience the *telling* of the story over and against—as they very thing that prevents—the kind of imaginative sympathy or (to quote Booth again) “genuine harmony” that a figure like Fielding's narrator promoted. That the narrator's perspective is necessarily removed from the story is perhaps not so interesting—after all, as both a formal fact (its extradiegetic position with respect to the diegesis of the story) and as a deliberately represented aspect of the novel (marked as being told “sixty years since”) it is not exactly hidden from view—but more interesting are the formal procedures by which the *Waverley* narrator's

distance from the story he conveys comes to be a basic part of the reader's experience of that same story. In the moments when the second story momentarily displaces the primary story, the narrator is no longer our companion or guide—a figure who, like Fielding's narrator addresses the reader to say that "I . . . shall be glad of your company" (*TJ*, 37), that is, to encourage mutual participation in the same imaginative act—but instead becomes a figure who draws our attention *away* from the story so that we can look at the effects of the way in which it is being told.

Because the intrinsic imaginative structure of *Waverley* is determined by the way it constantly switches between its primary and second story, its effect is to perpetually create and erase distance between the reader and the plot of Edward Waverley. Like the eponymous hero of the novel, we waver from position to position, never occupying one long enough to fully adjust to its unique contours. In this way, the narrative structure of *Waverley* is somewhere between Fielding's narrator whose intrusions help to create a harmony between the reader's expectations and sympathies and the plot of the story, and the contested narrator-space in Scott's poetry that created a sense of disjunction between the formal layers of the poem and the various media-historical positions that they implied. While the reader is never permitted to immerse himself fully in the plotted suspense of the novel (or the part of it that represents the story of Waverley), he is also never fully blocked from such an immersion either. The various formal layers that make up the totality of the novel are acknowledged in their separateness from each other, but are also integrated by way of the narrative function. That is to say, the reader's experience of *Waverley* is not simply of the story of a young man's dalliances with revolutionary forces, but *also* of the way in which a narrative consciousness is actively involved in the

presentation of such a story. This involves paying as much attention to the story of Waverley as it does to the procedures of live storytelling, scholarship, and self-conscious theorization of narrative form that support and project such plotted action.

And yet, because the narration of his novel involves such a variety of functions, Scott's narrator isn't always able to get the balance between them just right. In fact, there are at least two important moments in the novel where the narrator's thoughts about his own narrative function—and thoughts about his thoughts, and so on—receive such extended representation that the primary story appears to be all but forgotten. For example, as the novel closes, the narrator spends over 300 words worrying out loud about the best way to end his novel. He feels compelled to supply the theory of novelistic composition that—perhaps over and against a more scholarly concept of completion—explains or justifies his decision to “hurry over the circumstances, however important, which your imagination must have forestalled.” To attempt to trace “the dull progress” of every insignificant narrative thread would, the narrator believes, be “abusing your patience.” But, rather than actually moving quickly towards the closure of the plot, the narrator spends sentence after sentence describing what “we are . . . far from attempting,” what “must be consigned to merciless oblivion,” and the many other things that he can't tell “at length” (*W*, 480-1). As usual, Fielding offers a useful contrast to this kind of authorial intrusion that accompanies the process of closing a novel. Booth writes that the “growing intimacy” between reader and narrator in *Tom Jones* reaches its “denouement” in “the prefatory chapter to his last volume [where] the narrator . . . suggest[s] a distinct interest in the ‘story’ of his relationship with the reader.”<sup>178</sup> Fielding's narrator intrudes at the end of his novel as a way of creating closure in the relationship between himself and

his reader, which is distinct from the reader's desire for closure in the story of Tom Jones and his friends. This moment at the end of *Waverley*, however, does not offer anything approximating emotional closure between the reader and the narrator. Rather, it is at best an awkward appeal for patience in the form of a patience-testing commentary about the need for readerly understanding. In thinking out loud about the risks of spending too much time ending a novel, he ends up unnecessarily delaying the end of his own novel.

While this strange compulsion in the narrator that prompts him to over-explain does perhaps result in the psychological deepening of the narrator position—that is to say, it increases the extent to which the reader takes an interest in the narrator over and against his interest in the story of Edward Waverley—it is rooted not in an amiable desire to create a harmony between the reader and the materials of the story (as in Fielding), but instead is rooted in the narrator's own uncertainty about his function. In fact, it is perhaps in this regard that the *Waverley* narrator's comparison with Fielding's narrator is most illuminating. As is well known, Fielding begins *Tom Jones* on a humorous theoretical note that explains the logic behind his sociable narrative form. He writes that “an author ought to consider himself, not as a gentleman who gives a private or eleemosynary treat, but rather as one who keeps a public ordinary, at which all persons are welcome for their money.” The importance of the distinction does not simply lie in the how the author relates to his audience, but, just as importantly, in how he expects his audience to respond to him. Thus, unlike the gentleman's private guests, patrons at a public house “pay for what they eat,” and hence “will insist on satisfying their palates” to the extent that “if everything is not agreeable to their taste, [they] will challenge a right to censure, to abuse, and to d—n their dinner without control.” A storyteller in the Fieldingesque mode,

therefore, is one who is continuously making his own presence, and his intentions, known to his audience: “we have condescended to take a hint from these honest victuallers, and shall prefix not only a general bill of fare to our whole entertainment, but shall likewise give the reader particular bills to every course which is to be served up in this and the ensuing volumes” (29-30). In short, while Fielding’s narrator can be said to be in the reader’s service in the same way that an innkeeper is in the service of a paying customer, he is also something of a constant companion. He jokes with us, teases us, and, indeed, seems to care about us in approximately the same way a friend might.

The *Waverley* narrator’s second story, on the other hand, appears to be modeled after the “gentleman” whose “private or eleemosynary treat” Fielding dismisses on the grounds that it shuts down sociable exchange. Consider, for example, this series of narratorial expansions from one of the more vexed moments of *Waverley*’s second story:

Shall this be a long or a short chapter? (*W*, 186)

Initially, this moment is no different than many others like it in *Waverley* and which, in and of themselves, are not new in the history of the novel.<sup>179</sup> We begin to see, however, that the narrator is doing more here than simply indicating his controlling presence, and is in fact seriously thinking (or meant to be depicted as seriously thinking) about the best way to proceed:

Shall this be a long or a short chapter? – This is a question in which you, gentle reader, have no vote, however much you may be interested in the consequences; just as you may (like myself) probably have nothing to do with the imposing a new tax, excepting the trifling circumstance of being obliged to pay for it. More happy surely in the present case, since, though

it lies within my arbitrary power to extend my materials as I think proper, I cannot call you into Exchequer if you do not think proper to read my narrative. Let me therefore consider. (*W*, 186)

While Fielding expects his readers to “insist on satisfying their palates,” Scott’s readers “have no vote.”<sup>180</sup> Therefore, while the uncertainties that underlie these moments of *Waverley*’s second story may be interesting, they are also particularly self-reflexive and anti-social (not to mention explicitly anti-democratic); they withdraw from the world of sociability to analyze the narrator from his own, personal and separate, perspective.

It is clear, in fact, that this moment of narratorial confusion results from the internal variability in the narrator-position itself. It “lies within [his] arbitrary power” to say what he pleases, at any length that he chooses—and yet, he is also compelled by the scholar’s or editor’s commitment to objective and verifiable fact. Thus, Prufrock-like, he continues to be paralyzed by indecision:

Let me therefore consider. It is true that the annals and documents in my hands say but little of this Highland chase [the topic of the chapter]; but then I can find copious materials for description elsewhere. There is old Lindsay of Pitscottie ready at my elbow, with his Athole hunting, and his ‘lofted and joisted palace of green timber; with all kind of drink to be had in burgh and land, as ale, beer, wine, muscadel, malvaise, hippocras, and aquavitae; with wheat-bread, main-bread, ginge-bread, beef, mutton, lamb, veal, venison, goose, grice, capon, coney, crane, swan, partridge, plover, duck, drake, brissel-cock, pawnies, black-cock, muir fowl, and capercailzies’; not forgetting the ‘costly bedding, vaiselle, and napry,’ and

least of all, the ‘excelling stewards, cunning baxters, excellent cooks and pottingars, with confections and drugs for the desserts.’

In his poetry, when Scott wanted to dramatize the significance of the difference between two narrator-positions, he would stage a conflict between them in narrator-space. But, in the novel, there is no narrative other against which to compare his narrator—rather than a conflict between different kinds of narration, what we see here in *Waverley* is a conflict between different intellectual and imaginative commitments, all of which are contained under the same rubric of novelistic narration. And so the *Waverley* narrator rather ponderously performs his facility with the “copious materials” that he can turn to and mine for “description,” even though he acknowledges that “it is true that the annals and documents in my hands say but little of this Highland chase.” That is, lacking verifiable evidence for the primary action in this chapter—entitled “A Stag-Hunt and its Consequences”—the narrator borrows evidence from other verifiable sources to weave a fictional cloth out of factual threads. The narrator shows himself in the process of transitioning between the commitments of scholarship and the freedom of literary creation.

But, once he begins demonstrating the extent of his deep learning and the seemingly endless archive of evidence that supports it, he temporarily loses the thread of his discussion. Rather than mentioning the sources he draws on in the construction of this chapter, he appears to get lost in a thicket of his own self-indulgent footnoting:

There is old Lindsay of Pitscottie ready at my elbow. . . . Besides these particulars which may be thence gleaned for this Highland feast (the splendour of which induced the Pope’s legate to dissent from an opinion

which he had hitherto held, that Scotland, namely, was the – the – the  
latter end of the world) – besides these, might I not illuminate my pages  
with Taylor the Water Poet’s hunting in the braes of Mar, where,

Through heather, mosse, ’mong frogs, and bogs, and fogs,

’Mongst craggy cliffs and thunder-battered hills,

Hares, hinds, bucks, roes, are chased by men and dogs,

Where two hours’ hunting fourscore fat deer kills.

Lowland, you sports are low as is your seat;

The Highland games and minds are high and great.

(*W*, 186-7)

If we think of the narrator’s citation of sources as a direct representation of the footnote function within the space of the second story, then this passage shows him footnoting his footnotes—the anecdote of the “Popes legate” serves no purpose except to provide marginally useful context for the already barely-interesting citation of “old Lindsay of Pitscottie.” The narrator, that is, seems to be going through these references more for his own edification than for his audience’s—as he appears to realize at the beginning of the next paragraph:

But without further tyranny over my readers, or display of the extent of my own reading, I shall content myself with borrowing a single incident from the memorable hunting at Lude, commemorated in the ingenious Mr Gunn’s Essay on the Caledonian Harp, and so proceed in my story with all the brevity that my natural style of composition, partaking of



what scholars call the periphrastic and ambagitory, and the vulgar the circumbendibus, will permit me. (*W*, 187)

The significance of Scott's "tyranny over [his] readers" in these moments in *Waverley* can best be understood by comparing them to a similar kind of extended authorial intrusion in the verse epistles of *Marmion*. I argued earlier (in Chapter Three) that the verse epistles in *Marmion* serve to emphasize one of the key formal-thematic elements of the poem—namely, that as much as the extradiegetic narrative voices might desire it, a (human, social) connection with the diegetic realm that they narrate is not possible. Thus, when at the beginning and end of a long and intrusive verse epistle, Scott claims that his story "flow[s] unconfined," it is of a piece with several other moments in the poem that cause the reader to experience the lack of connection between different kinds of narrative positions distinctly as a loss. In *Marmion*, as in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, Scott was still working through the implications of the loss of orality and its displacement by print and print narration. Thus, the formal engagements in his poetry serve as a meditation on the relation of print narration and oral narration, and, more broadly, on the threat of losing contact with Scotland's ancient traditions.

But in *Waverley*, Scott's narrator does not attempt to work against the inevitable discontinuity that his intrusions cause. Quite the opposite, in fact: from the very beginning the narrator acknowledges that the "gentle reader[']s" interests are in no way being served by his meandering thoughts on chapter length, sourcing, and the best way to end a novel. Instead, what we see in these extended representations of *Waverley*'s second story is an entirely inward-looking moment of narration, the result of which is to represent something like the narrative function in its purified state: freed temporarily

from the responsibilities of narrating diegetic content, all that remains is the narrator's (typically unvoiced) thoughts about his own narrative actions. And while these thoughts result in something approximating an interesting narrative crisis, they are divorced entirely from the broader media-historical project that similar kinds of narrative disturbances would work to illuminate in Scott's poetry. That is, the disproportionate attention paid to *Waverley*'s second story is a part of the same trajectory of formal innovations and development that began with Scott's use of tensions within narrator-space to explore the consequences of media-historical change, but the way in which the focus on the narrator's activities takes form in the novel is without the kind of philosophical, cultural, or literary-historical anxiety that made its deployment in his poetry so poignant—and so fertile, as I'll argue, for development by other novelists.

## **Cross-Generic Influence in Literary History (Path 2): Fielding and Austen vs. Scott and Austen**

### **(i) The Longer History of Intrusive Narration**

While the intrusive narrator in the style of Fielding does have a short afterlife in the eighteenth-century novel—*Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767) is perhaps the most dazzling example—it is assumed more or less to have disappeared by the time the realist novel has emerged as the dominant novelistic form. Thus, Dorrit Cohn writes that “with the growing interest in the problems of individual psychology, the audible narrator disappears from the fictional world. . . . A fully developed figural consciousness siphons away the emotional and intellectual energy formerly lodged in the expansive narrator.”<sup>181</sup>

(25). However, as I've been arguing, it is possible to discern a longer history of these Fieldingesque intrusions throughout Scott's poetry, as well as in his first novel—and, indeed, as I'll argue in this section, through the development and enrichment of impersonal narration by Jane Austen. My argument up to this point has been to claim that while in his poetry Scott develops narrative form by associating different kinds of narration with different states of historical relevance, his development of narrative form in *Waverley* consists in the way he uses the position of the narrator to think explicitly about the history and variety of functions of novelistic narration. In this way, I have attempted to track Scott's gradually declining interest in the kind of outsider position that the print narrator must occupy. But, if Scott's use of a disembodied narrative voice to mark the displacement of a living oral tradition has important implications for our critical evaluation of the formal significance of his poetry, it will also be my argument that it bears on our understanding of the history of formal development that follows in the wake of his poetry. That is, the possibilities contained in Scott's development of narrator-space in his poetry are not forgotten—merely transformed, and given new life in a different generic environment.

The question I want to pose in this section, therefore, is: what would it look like for an impersonal narrator also to be an intrusive one? Or, alternately, what descriptive and critical capacities are possessed by a narrator whose intrusions make available the perspective of narrative alienation itself? I argue that these questions help to clarify the unique features of Jane Austen's approach to her narrators, and, moreover, help to establish the transformations in narrative form that make up a longer history of intrusive narration. This is a tradition that extends from the example of Fielding, and, despite the

different uses to which it has been put, is ultimately connected by a recurring pattern of narration whereby the narrator is precipitated out of the story, and is made into a self-reflexive object of analysis. While this kind of intrusion does cease to function in the same kind of zero-sum psychological economics articulated by Dorrit Cohn—where the extent to which the narrator is interesting is also the extent to which what is interesting about characters is unexplored—it does, almost inversely, allow us to see that what is interesting about the narrator *is the same thing as* what is interesting about the character that it temporarily absorbs, displaces, or effaces. Or, to speak in terms with more contemporary currency—the longer history of intrusive narration is, as much as anything else, a history of the emergence of what we might call an indigenous narrative theory, an analysis of narration itself that is only partially separable from the story in which it is vitally integrated.

I argue that the formal posterity of Scott's poetry can be identified in the way that Jane Austen's elegant narrative voice is constructed so as to analyze the position of social outsiders. Moreover, I argue that while Scott's *novels* were even more popular, and by most critical accounts more formally innovative, than his *poetry*, it is *only* in his poetry that we find the formal interactions between narrator and character that continue to structure approaches to narrative form in the tradition of realism.<sup>182</sup> That is, it is Scott's poetry, and specifically *not* his novels, that are influential in the formal history of narrator-character relations.

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It will be obvious to most readers of *Mansfield Park* (1814) that Fanny Price, the novel's ostensible protagonist, is unique in the history of Austenian narration, in that she begins the novel in a psychological posture that seems designed to avoid both being "main" and being a "character." When she first arrives at Mansfield Park as a very young girl the narrator describes her as being "afraid of everybody, ashamed of herself, and longing for the home she had left, she knew not how to look up, and could scarcely speak to be heard, or without crying" (11). After a week of crying herself to sleep every night, and trying at all costs not to attract any form of attention, she is finally joined by her kind-hearted cousin Edmund, who attempts to console her. But when he tries to persuade her to "speak openly" about her unhappiness, "for a long while no answer could be obtained beyond a 'no, no—not at all—no, thank you'" (12). When she does eventually speak to him, however, the way that her speech is represented suggests that the narrator is sympathetic with Fanny's desire to avoid direct observation, and intentionally does what she can to protect her from it:

It was [her brother] William whom she talked of most and wanted most to see. . . . '*William did not like she should come away—he had told her he should miss her very much indeed.*' 'But William will write to you, I dare say.' '*Yes, he had promised he would, but he had told her to write first.*' 'And when shall you do it?' She hung her head and answered, hesitatingly, '*she did not know; she had not any paper.*' (13, emphasis added)

I've added emphasis to mark the difference between the representation of Fanny's speech and Edmund's speech, but the distinction should be fairly obvious even without it—Edmund's speech is directly reported, whereas Fanny's speech is folded into the

protective third-person distance of the narrator's position. Thus, as Gerard Genette writes of free indirect style, there is in this scene a "confusion between the speech . . . of the character and that of the narrator" (172). But, the stylistic confusion between character and narrator does not envelop the whole scene—rather, Austen's narrator intrudes to create a calculated diversion of direct attention to *just one* character.

Fanny's speech does, in this same conversation, eventually rise to the level of direct reportage. But her brief, fragmentary sentences—"Yes, very"; "But cousin—will it go to the post?"; "My uncle!"—and the narrator's claim that "from this day Fanny grew more comfortable" prove to be mistaken indicators of Fanny's psychological accessibility as a protagonist (13). For example, when Fanny has an opportunity to see William for the first time in many years—a time when surely the content of her consciousness would be especially interesting—her thoughts, feelings, actions, and words evade, or are protected from, detailed narrative representation: "Their eager affection in meeting, their exquisite delight in being together, their hours of happy mirth, and moments of serious conference, *may be imagined . . .*" (17, emphasis added). Her experience is marked as a particularly rich one, but the content of it is cordoned off from narrative representation. Instead, the narrator permits the reader only to "imagine" how she felt.

And so, in response to my question (What would it look like for an impersonal narrator also to be an intrusive one?), Austen, it seems, provides us with an answer. In fact, the beginning of *Mansfield Park* can be seen as a test case for precisely this kind of intrusion, for, while a novel whose narrator intrudes as a way of deflecting attention from her beleaguered protagonist is formally interesting, it would also seem to produce a distraction that works against the very project of plotted suspense and character-based

storytelling that Austen's novels depend on. Austen appears to acknowledge the seriousness of this dilemma when, merely a page after we last left Fanny—"imagin[ing]" rather than seeing how she felt—the narrative makes a jarring temporal leap over five apparently uninteresting years:

The first event of any importance in the family was the death of Mr. Norris, which happened when Fanny was about fifteen, and necessarily introduced alterations and novelties. (18)

It is perhaps easy for the first-time reader of *Mansfield Park* to think of these five years as actually being devoid of "event[s] of any importance," because it's not yet clear that the category of "importance" is in fact oriented to Fanny's perception of events. But, to the re-reader (or even a first-time reader who only knows that Fanny Price is the novel's protagonist), it is clear that these "alterations and novelties" have very little to do with the death of a family member, but rather refer to the unhappy changes the aftermath of this "event" threatens to introduce into Fanny's life. Specifically, when Mr. Norris dies, Sir Thomas begins to think that Fanny ought now to spend the majority of her time living with her newly widowed aunt Norris. Mrs. Norris, of course, has already proven herself to be a skillful tormentor of Fanny, and so it's no surprise that Fanny wouldn't want to be constantly in her company. But, it is clear that the threat of living under Mrs. Norris's emotional abuse is only the most obvious of Fanny's concerns, and it is possible to discern a deeper worry that living with her aunt would force her into a role of central importance, and, moreover, that she would be forced to speak for herself. She admits as much when she tries to explain to Edmund why she is so averse to her pending removal:

“The only difference [says Edmund] will be, that living with your aunt, you will necessarily be brought forward, as you ought to be. *Here*, there are too many, whom you can hide behind; but with *her* you will be forced to speak for yourself.”

“Oh! do not say so.” (21)

It is not insignificant that, on the verge of finding herself without a multitude of people to “hide behind,” Fanny’s speech is directly reported (only the second time in the novel). It’s as if the narrator, in anticipation of the increased importance that is about to be imposed on Fanny (or in her desire to make the reader anticipate such a change), begins preparing an expanded role for her in the narrative representation as well. Becoming a more important character in one register (aunt Norris’s life) implies becoming a more important character in another register (the narrative record of events). Even more significant, however, is that Austen chooses to represent this distinctly formal drama. It would have been easy enough for Austen to begin the narration of *Mansfield Park* in the immediate aftermath of “the first event of any importance”—that is, at a time when it appears as if, despite her strong desire not to, Fanny begins to emerge as a recognizable protagonist—but instead Austen spends a sizable chunk of the novel’s first volume drawing attention to our inability to see the detailed content of Fanny’s thoughts and words.

If the second story in *Waverley* showed the possibility of a narrator’s attention being drawn away from the story as he vocalizes his thoughts about the procedures of storytelling, then this moment in *Mansfield Park* takes that formal move one step further: the reader is made to see not only the possibility of a separation between narrator (or



narration) and story, but also that a *character* might desire to achieve the same kind of distance. Fanny may not have a clear sense of why she wants to avoid being made a central figure in what we, as readers, know is a marriage-plot novel—for example, it is not an act of protest against domesticity and the personality-limiting dictates of plotted progress and marriage—but Austen is keenly sensitive both to the formal and social significance of such an anti-social posture. That is, Fanny is neither recognizable as a character in the novel, nor is she recognizable as the kind of person about whom we might possibly care. And, it is only in a moment when she finds herself on the verge of unavoidably being “brought forward” that the narrator begins to withdraw the fog of near-anonymity in which she had suspended Fanny for the previous five years. In short, we are able to see the importance that Austen invests in the formal separation between narrator and character, and also her understanding of what sacrifices each position requires: to be a narrator requires being invisible to the social world that draws your attention, and to be a protagonist requires speaking for yourself (even, or especially, in the presence of those who are invested in your unhappiness).

Of course, the inverse of this formulation is equally true, as the novel makes clear when Mrs. Norris absolutely refuses to take Fanny into her home, thus temporarily thwarting the possibility of making Fanny into a recognizable main character in the novel. In the aftermath of this non-event, where no “alterations and novelties” are actually introduced into Fanny’s life at all, Fanny once again disappears behind the screen of other characters, and the screen of narrative distance as well:

Fanny soon learnt how unnecessary had been her fears of a removal; and her spontaneous, untaught felicity on the discovery, conveyed some

consolation to Edmund for his disappointment in what he had expected to be so essentially serviceable to her. (25)

Rather than reporting the words that Fanny's "spontaneous, untaught felicity" describes, the narrative again keeps them at a distance. Fanny is permitted to remain elusive, the content of her consciousness largely unrepresented.

The narrator's performance of various levels of proximity and distance—where Fanny's consciousness and speech are alternately not represented at all (as in the five-year gap), spoken of in vague summary, or recorded in detail—suggests the extent to which this narrator is defined by a complex or contradictory set of desires and positions. That is, she is interested in and drawn to protagonists (or characters who can potentially be figured as such), but she is also sympathetic with a kind of extreme shyness the verges on antisociality. This duality in the narrator, of course, is connected to Austen's signature use of free indirect style. As Frances Ferguson has argued, the significance of Austen's deployment of free indirect style is that she uses it to analyze individual consciousness as the product both of its susceptibility to, and resistance of, the standards of the community. Thus, in Austen's fiction, "individuals can be described as having temporal extension and a traceable history only from the standpoint of the constant comparison of their current situation to a projected communal stance, but individuals would cease to be individuals (would become indistinguishable from one another) if they ever actually coincided with the communal stance."<sup>183</sup> Ferguson's primary goal is to work against the Foucauldian critical tendency to subsume a character's identity and consciousness under the related rubrics of social discourse and surveillance—which she claims has had the effect of "dispatch[ing] character to the shadows" (158)—but it is equally clear that her insights

about Austen's interest in character can shed light on the narrator that Austen develops in order to provide that complex characterological analysis. For example, by taking an interest in the aspect of individuality that is partially impervious to the "communal stance," Austen's narrator also indicates her own (at least partial) separation from that communal stance. Perhaps another way of saying this is that Austen's narrator possesses a psychology that is similar in kind to that of the characters she narrates—both participating in social judgment while not being entirely contained by it. And yet she is not herself a character, is not even a person. Moreover, *unlike* characters, who "can be described as having temporal extension and a traceable history," Austen's narrator is neither perceptible in time nor history, is very much in "the shadows."

Thus, as a result of her complex position of being interested in the aspects of individuality that are not shaped by the community, while at the same time being the only figure who is in a position to represent (or obscure) the private realms of individual subjectivity, the narrator of *Mansfield Park* is able temporarily to extend to Fanny the kind of retreat from attention that she, perhaps antisocially, desires. Austen's narrator in *Mansfield Park* is distinguished not only by the value she implicitly places on the possibility of escaping social observation and participation, but also by her own implicit separation from that social world. Throughout the first volume of *Mansfield Park*, the narrator, in apparent sympathy with Fanny, repeatedly intrudes to filter Fanny's thoughts and words through the asocial and impersonal position of extradiegetic narration itself. The reader therefore experiences Fanny in approximately the same way we experience the narrator: wrapped in a mantle of impersonality.

It is important, however, that the narrator's embrace of "my Fanny" (362) within the protective distance of third-person anonymity or blurriness can only be temporary. As the novel progresses—as the Crawfords enter into and disrupt the lives of Fanny and the Mansfield set—Fanny becomes more open to, indeed desirous of, the social and sexual attention that she had been habitually avoiding. The threat that a woman she despises (Mary Crawford) might win the heart of the man she eventually realizes she loves (her cousin Edmund) causes Fanny to awaken to the benefits of sociality, and the narrator responds by withdrawing the fog of anonymity, gradually allowing the reader to see Fanny in the same way we see other characters. Thus, Austen's narrator is committed to, and capable of representing, both the extent to which a character defies or is separate from the social order in which she is (partially or wholly) embedded, and the extent to which her expectations, desires, and judgments are eventually determined by the standards of that same social order. Fanny's movement between a narrator-like impersonality and a social world whose values the narrator also assumes proves the supple variability inherent in Austen's narrator.

While literary critics today typically associate this kind of impersonal or self-abnegating narration with the novel and the tradition of realism,<sup>184</sup> it is difficult to find a precedent for it in the tradition of the novel before Austen. Indeed, as my discussion of the novels of Henry Fielding should make clear, it is possible to discern a norm in novelistic narration that was very nearly the opposite of the kind of impersonality and invisibility displayed by Austen's narrator. Thus, at one point in *Tom Jones*, the narrator unexpectedly interrupts his own hyperbolic praise of the "benevolence" of Mr. Allworthy to say:

Reader, take care, I have unadvisedly led thee to the top of as high a hill as Mr Allworthy's, and how to get thee down without breaking thy neck, I do not well know. However, let us e'en venture to slide down together; for Miss Bridget rings her bell, and Mr Allworthy is summoned to breakfast, where I must attend, and, if you please, shall be glad of your company. (*TJ*, 37)

This is a narrator whose winning personality is, for better or worse, an integral part of the experience of reading the novel in which he is embedded.

As evidenced by her early novel, *Northanger Abbey* (1798-1803, the last novel she completed before writing *Mansfield Park*), Austen herself was at one time indebted to Fielding's particular narrative style. Consider, for example, the following intrusion by the novel's humorous and companionable narrator:

Whether [Catherine Morland] thought of [Henry Tilney] so much, while she drank her warm wine and water, and prepared herself for bed, as to dream of him when there, cannot be ascertained; but I hope it was no more than in a slight slumber, or morning doze at most; for if it be true, as a celebrated writer has maintained, that no young lady can be justified in falling in love before the gentleman's love is declared, it must be very improper that a young lady should dream of a gentleman before the gentleman is first known to have dreamt of her. (17-18)

Quite the opposite, therefore, of what we see in Fielding—not to mention all of Austen's previous writing<sup>185</sup>—Austen's narrator in *Mansfield Park* intrudes not to be a humorous companion to the reader, but instead to replace a world of familiar social experience with

something altogether different. Fanny is neither depicted in the rich social detail in which most of Austen's main characters are rendered, nor is she ignored and relegated to unrepresented obscurity. Rather, Austen's narrator aligns with Fanny Price by temporarily granting her a representational and characterological *improminence* that prevents our focusing on her too closely, but that also prevents us from forgetting about her altogether. Moreover, by drawing the reader's attention to something that can barely be perceived—or something that can only be perceived by the way it avoids direct observation—Austen is doing more than simply creating a narrative effect that is expressive of her protagonist's personal drama and desires. That's because, while the narrator's intrusions have the effect of blurring representational focus on Fanny, they have the complementary effect of illuminating what is interesting about the position of the narrator—namely, its separation from (or invisibility to) the world of sociality that nonetheless draws its attention. The narrator's formal separation from the world she represents is therefore invested with a kind of practical or sociological density with which she comes to signify the loss of personhood and social invisibility that her characters are threatened with if they fail, or willfully refuse, to become properly socialized.<sup>186</sup>

Needless to say, there are significant formal and conceptual differences between Austen's Fieldingesque narrator (in *Northanger Abbey*) and Austen's observing, but insistently unobservable narrator (in *Mansfield Park*). The cause of the differences in these novels can be understood, at least in part, by consulting Austen's biography during the years that separate their composition. Between the years of 1801 and 1809, Austen and her family underwent a series of relocations—from Steventon to Bath (1801), from Bath to Southampton (1806), and finally, from Southampton to Chawton (1809). During

these unsettled years, Austen wrote very little, and it was not until her family's final settlement in 1809 that Austen would embark on the second phase of her career as a novelist. Austen's earliest biographer—her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh—characterizes this as a particularly unhappy period for Austen (50),<sup>187</sup> going so far as to represent it as a state of perpetual homelessness: “Chawton may be called the *second*, as well as the *last* home of Jane Austen; for during the temporary residences of the party at Bath and Southampton she was only a sojourner in a strange land, but here she had found a real home amongst her own people” (67). Austen-Leigh doesn't speculate about the possible relation between Fanny's early situation in *Mansfield Park*, in which she is unhappily separated from her family, and Austen's situation during these years of “temporary residences,” in which she too was unhappily separated from her childhood home. But, it is probably not too much to say that Fanny's psychological posture of rejection and avoidance was inspired in part by Austen's own experiences during her time as a “sojourner in a strange land.” Indeed, it is plausible to think that it was during these years that Austen first came intimately to understand the feeling of being separated from, or somehow being outside of, the social world in which she had previously been unproblematically embedded.

Expanding on the significance of this “notably fallow period” more recently, William Galperin has noted that in addition to her constant relocations, Austen also “experienced a number of other personal setbacks and disappointments” during this time, which may have contributed to her growing interest in (and exposure to) a perspective on life that is projected, as it were, from the other side of sociality. These include the death of her father, the death of a potential suitor, and Austen's rejection of a marriage proposal.

In other words, these years brought about Austen's "arrival at the very spinsterhood and state of dependency that had remained and would continue to remain a dreaded eventuality in her novels."<sup>188</sup> And, while Austen was experiencing these personal changes in fortune, she was also aware that, on a broader national level, discourses about "the future of England both abroad and at home" were in the process of being re-shaped in terms that were particularly restrictive for women. A vivid example of this discursive change can be seen in a text that Austen herself was reading during these years—Thomas Gisborne's *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*. Galperin points out that Gisborne's *Enquiry* is marked by a hegemonic ambition that had previously been unknown in the genre of conduct manuals: specifically, Gisborne marks a new era of attempting to "regulate everyday practice to a specific, indeed single, model so that the positive difference that women make will be proportionate to the various differences in class, bearing, or behavior they must forsake in the service of the 'good'" (168). At the time she was writing *Mansfield Park*, therefore, Austen, would have been confronted with two mutually-reinforcing ideas about the future: first that her own prospects of domestic happiness and financial independence had all but slipped away; and, second, that the future for women in England would increasingly be defined by the strictly regulated terms of domestic ideology. It is not therefore surprising that Austen would have re-evaluated the stakes and vulnerabilities of being a female member of the social world in between the writing of *Northanger Abbey* and *Mansfield Park*.

But if these years can be thought of as introducing Austen to a new perspective on the limits of, and sacrifices required by, sociality and domesticity for women, we have not yet uncovered the process by which she came to integrate this new perspective with



the form of the novel. There is still a question of construction and implementation: how or why was Austen drawn to the relation between character and narrator as a site for expressing her new perspective? Moreover, what was it about the position of the narrator itself that led Austen to think of it as being separated from—both inaccessible to and unhindered by—the world of sociality that draws its attention? As I'll argue in the next section, this question can be answered by turning to the tradition of narrative poetry in general, and the formally-innovative poetry of Walter Scott in particular.

## **(ii) Conclusion: The Poetic Pre-History of Narrative Impersonality**

This brings us to the question of the novelistic posterity of (Scott's) narrative poetry—that is to say, the question of what cross-generic influence looks like in particular instances. While literary historians do not tend to speak of Jane Austen's novels in terms of their relation to Scott's poetry, we know Austen herself was a passionate (if envious) admirer of his poems. In a letter written in September of 1814, for example, Austen complained that

Walter Scott has no business to write novels, especially good ones.—It is not fair.—He has Fame and Profit enough as a Poet, and should not be taking the bread out of other people's mouths.—I do not like him, & do not mean to like *Waverley* if I can help it—but I fear I must.<sup>189</sup>

The immediate context for Austen's comment, of course, is the publication (two months prior) of Scott's first novel—but contained within her worry about his potential as a novelist is an acknowledgment that his poetry has already had an effect on her. Her assumption about the probable quality of Scott's novel must depend on her opinion of his

skill as a poet, for she would have nothing else to base her expectations upon (the letter makes clear that she hasn't yet read his novel). She may not "like him," but she clearly understands that, in his career as a poet, Scott achieved something that she wishes to achieve for herself. This professional jealousy is detectable even against the gently ironic strain in which she speaks of her "fear" of *Waverley*—for, in a literary marketplace that heavily favored works in the style of Scott, Austen, like all authors, could not help but feel the pressure of his example. Indeed, I believe that Scott's poetry was an important influence on Austen as she worked to develop her distinctive form of free indirect style in part because of his popularity (see Chapter One).

It is probably impossible to know how much Austen consciously or deliberately borrowed from Scott, but I hope that my argument has made it clear enough that his narrative poetry provides a potent formal template for understanding the genuine formal innovations on display in *Mansfield Park*. This is not to say that Austen's novel reads like or produces effects that are merely derivative of what can be found in Scott's poetry, but rather that what is original in *Mansfield Park* is part of an identifiable history of form that—in part because of its popularity and in part because of its potential or latent relevance for the representation of impersonality and sociality—would have both constrained and enabled Austen's creative decisions. Here it may be useful to invoke Claudio Guillén's distinction between "influences and textual similarities."<sup>190</sup> An influence is a "significant part of the genesis of art," and may not appear to be similar to another work in the way that an obvious "parallelism" might.<sup>191</sup> Indeed, "the absence of a similarity may conceal a genuine influence."<sup>192</sup> Rather than focusing on the aesthetic elements of influence, Guillén focuses on how an influence affects an artist's psychology

as a way of “open[ing] . . . the doors of a writer’s workshop and the endlessly complex process of artistic creation”<sup>193</sup> Following Guillén, I want to argue that Scott’s poetry can go a long way towards opening the doors of Austen’s workshop, can help us not incidentally but essentially to understand the specificity and the complexity of her artistic choices.

For example, in the *Lay*, the minstrel’s vulnerability to empirical circumstance is seen as an essential component of the medial and formal change that his death presages: print narration is not subject to the limitations of human embodiment. And, in *Marmion*, the figure of the minstrel is valued in part for the way he, unlike the print narrator, is able to be a version of Wordsworth’s “man speaking to men”—he participates, is socially embedded, in the world of men to whom he sings. By combining these two approaches to understanding the space occupied by the narrator, we can see that Scott’s poetry produces two overlapping ways of understanding the nature of the print narrator: its strength is that it is not subject to the exigencies of empirical circumstance, but its weakness is that it is barred from embodying a kind of socially-embedded personhood. I argue that these two ways of enriching the function of the narrator are identifiable as constitutive elements in the kind of narrator that we begin to see in the novels of Austen.<sup>194</sup>

Nonetheless, Austen can also be understood to have put Scott’s formal innovations in the service of ends not yet, or not fully, imagined by Scott himself. Thus, Austen does not simply install Scott’s narrators into her novels, but rather innovates upon them herself. This is partially the result of Austen’s own constructive needs (as a writer of marriage-plot novels), and in part the result of the kinds of transformations that inter-generic borrowing is bound to give rise to. Useful on the originality of Austen’s narrator

is D. A. Miller, who has argued that “nowhere else in nineteenth-century English narration have the claims of the ‘person,’ its ideology, been more completely denied” than in the construction of Austen’s narrator.<sup>195</sup> Despite the claim for historical originality, Miller’s interests are not really in the history of narrative form—and so he can hardly be blamed for not taking account of what I argue is the poetic ancestry of Austen’s style—but his analysis does help to clarify what constructive problem Scott’s poetry might have helped Austen to solve. As Miller points out, Austen is committed to using narrative form to suggest an “unalloyed antithesis between narration and character” (46), an aspect of form that is clearly presaged in a variety of ways by the poetry of Walter Scott. The difference between the two authors’ use of this formal strategy, however, consists in the terms by which they develop the nature of that separation. Unlike Scott, Austen is uniquely focused on the unsettling choice that a young woman must make either to be “neutered” (metaphorically, socially) or to submit to the personality-limiting conditions of domesticity and socialization (35). Austen understands that, for her characters, this dilemma is inevitable—and yet, her fiction is marked by its temporary suspension (in the minds of readers and characters alike). This results, as Miller argues, in the fantasy that Austen’s characters might be committed to the same ethos as her narrator, namely, a pursuit of impersonality and freedom from social determination. But, while Austen’s *characters* are eventually “mortifi[ed]” out of the position of what Miller terms “Austen Style,” a sacrifice required to maintain their personhood, Austen’s *narrators* continue to occupy the space of Absolute impersonality—a position that is explicitly marked as being beyond recognition within the social reality of the story (45-6).

According to Miller this (inevitably doomed) fantasy is typical of Austen's fiction in general, but my discussion of *Northanger Abbey* above should be sufficient evidence to show that Austen's narrators change significantly throughout her career as a novelist.<sup>196</sup> Thus, there are additional distinctions to be made not only about the effects of Austen's use of narrative form in *Mansfield Park* in particular, but also about the possibility of her having borrowed from Scott (consciously or otherwise) in the construction of that novel. While in Scott's poetry the separation between (narrating) character and (print) narrator is more formally emphatic than it is in *Mansfield Park*, that's because his interest in their relation is primarily media-historical, not social. Nonetheless, both authors produce narrative effects that depend on their narrators being embedded in imaginative structures that variously project the diegesis from a perspective that is explicitly marked as being outside or beyond the kinds of experiences and characters that they represent. Austen takes this basic formal template an important step further in *Mansfield Park* by using her narrator to intrude on behalf of a vulnerable character—but even this should not be taken as entirely foreign or unrelated to Scott's poetry. For, just as the construction of the print narrator of the *Lay* suggests the liberating possibilities of no longer being a member of the empirical world that burdens the minstrel, so too does Austen's narrator suggest the profound relief that awaits those young women who might be able to escape the requirements of sociality and personhood. And yet, both Scott and Austen understand that these utopian possibilities are predicated on a total separation from human social values that nearly any living human would find to be unpalatable. Thus, despite the differences between the two, the important *formal* point is that both Scott and Austen construct their narrative positions as ways of thinking about

what it would look like to no longer be vulnerable to the logic of progress that the narrated characters are inevitably in the grips of. Though the narrators are in some ways deformed versions of the characters who draw their attention, and therefore are understood to have lost something essential about their personality, they are also, again in Miller's words, "utterly exempt from the social necessities that govern the narrated world" (31) They are permitted to thrive, however ethereally, in the space of print narration.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Becoming a Novel: *Don Juan*, the Historical Perception of Genre, and the Origin of the Novel-Poetry Binary**

#### **I. Historical Variations in the Perception of Poetry**

Thus far, I have been discussing the formal relation between poetry and the novel, and how an overemphasis on the category of “lyric,” as opposed to narrative poetry, has limited our ability to understand the ways in which this relationship has played out in literary history. This “‘super-sizing’ of the lyric” has resulted, among other things, in a broad conceptual blurring of genre distinctions, so that not only do we tend to identify the essence of all kinds of poetry in terms of its particularly lyric qualities, but we also have begun to categorize many examples of nineteenth-century narrative poetry as being primarily *novelistic*.<sup>197</sup> Thus, the “characteristic development” of Romantic-era narrative poetry, as Karl Kroeber once suggested, is “to be understood as a contribution to the enlarging and enriching of realistic fiction which reached so impressive a culmination in the Victorian novel.”<sup>198</sup> It is safe to assert, therefore, that for popular and academic audiences alike the experience of reading poetry has undergone a massive change in the age of the novel’s dominance.

While our understanding of these changes has been enriched by occasional discussions of the topic by literary historians, most of these discussions tend to follow in the tradition of thinking about the effects of lyric and lyricized notions of poetry on our experience of reading poetry and the novel. Mary Favret, for example, has shown that the novel’s continuing rise during the Romantic period was dependent on its explicit

subordination of (lyric) poetry.<sup>199</sup> Thus, the proliferation of Romantic novels that featured inserted lyric poems was part of a deliberate strategy of the novel to “display poetry to its own advantage, using the structures of romance, physical appearance, and commodification to engender a ‘feminized’ lyric, while accruing to itself the virtues of the ‘real,’ the true, and the natural. What happens to poetry in these works, in other words, helps the novel write a story about itself.”<sup>200</sup> Favret’s analysis of the emergence and codification of a new hierarchy of genres allows us to see how Romantic-era readers and writers alike began to think—to have their concepts conditioned—in a way that continues to structure our ideas about the relation of poetry and the novel: it is a case of realism versus lyricism, prose versus lineated stanzas, and of one genre’s ascendancy being easily associated with another’s gradual decline. In another more recent essay, Ann Wierda Rowland has also attempted to understand the relation of poetry to the novel during the Romantic period by examining how Romantic-era thinkers themselves explicitly conceived of that relation. Considering commonalities among a diverse group of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thinkers, Rowland demonstrates that by the nineteenth century there was a “widely accepted notion of poetry as passionate and imaginative language,” and that this notion “gradually shifted the relationship between poetry and the novel, providing new ways of understanding the novel as poetical, of finding poetry in prose, or defending the prose in poetry.”<sup>201</sup> Her essay, like Favret’s, is useful for the way it can help to highlight one of the signature effects of changes to the perception of genre over the last two hundred years.

One of the main goals of this chapter is to draw on and expand these discussions of the relation between poetry and the novel to examine the emergence, and trace the



effects, of a way of thinking about their relation that does not exclusively privilege (nor dismiss) the category of the lyric. Why was the novel able to distinguish itself from the lyric while at the same time incorporating, and being experienced as employing, poetic elements? Why and how did theories of poetic language change such that what was deemed to be particularly poetic was at the same time thought to be separable from the writing of lineated and metrical verse? While poetic language can be found in the novel, can novelistic writing inhabit poetry? And under what conditions does a poetic-seeming object cease to be what it appears at first glance to be, to become primarily a novel or novelistic in common experience? Thus, while I am interested in how changes to the experience of reading the poetry or the novel are matched, precipitated, or caused by related changes to our experience of reading the novel or poetry, I am also interested in why this particular relation—between poetry and the novel—has become such a crucial linchpin for explaining and organizing our experiences of reading in general.

It would seem that a natural place to begin would be with the Romantic notion of poetry as passionate language, which explains and categorizes the experience of reading and writing poetry in a way that is simultaneously narrowing in its conception and expansive in its application. The seeds were no doubt planted as early as Wordsworth's famous assertion in 1800 that poetry is the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," and would have begun to take stronger root later in the nineteenth century when a thinker like J. S. Mill would argue that the difference between "incident" and "feeling" is the basis for the separation between, and different valuations of, *narrative* and *poetry*—a form of Wordsworth's argument that, as noted by M. H. Abrams, has been freed from "the network of qualifications in which Wordsworth had carefully placed it."<sup>202</sup> But it

must at the same time be noted that even late into the nineteenth century narrative poetry continued to enjoy enormous popularity, with poets like the Brownings, Tennyson, and George Meredith finding large readerships in part because of the complex stories they told in their narrative poems. Indeed, as late as 1907 a critic writing for the *Atlantic Monthly* was struck by what he took to be the sweeping and recent changes to common, basic notions of what poetry is or can be:

The principle upon which poets, critics and cultivated readers now mostly proceed is about as follows: a certain very lovely group of emotions is set aside from others, and we are instructed that these are the emotions which are awakened by poetry; whatever awakens any other sensations may be all very well, but it is not poetry.<sup>203</sup>

Thus, even as we can retrospectively acknowledge that, since the nineteenth century, the elements of plot, suspense, narration, and characterization have all, more or less, migrated into (or were overtaken by) the novel—the counterpart of which is that poetry increasingly came to be the site of avant-garde experimentation, where the easy comforts of the novel were challenged—we must also understand that this history proceeded at an uneven pace, with trends in both readership and writerly practice that seem to defy, or at least to baffle, the concepts and expectations of contemporary readers.

A less obvious but equally important current in this approximately two-hundred year change to the historical perception of the generic territories of the lyric and the novel is what we might identify as the “super-sizing” of the novel. There is, of course, the oft-noted formal point about the novel—for example that it observes “the freedom of a conqueror who knows no law other than that of his unlimited expansion . . . , abolish[ing]

every literary caste and traditional form and appropriat[ing] all modes of expression, exploiting unchallenged whichever method it chooses.”<sup>204</sup> But I want here also to draw attention to a distinct (however related) phenomenon—namely, that readers have increasingly been willing to categorize as a *novel* all works of *prose fiction*. This point has been made occasionally in the history of criticism, but it is usually not explored at length, as in the following comment from Northrop Frye in his “Theory of Genres”:

...[T]he word novel, which up to about 1900 was still the name of a more or less recognizable form, has since expanded into a catchall term which can be applied to practically any prose book that is not ‘on’ something.<sup>205</sup>

The ballooning of the category of “lyric” to overtake “poetry” is therefore mirrored by the same kind of ballooning of “novel” to overtake all prose fiction. It would be hard, I think, to overstate the importance that such a change has had on our experiences of reading and practices of writing.

I bring together these related movements here so as to suggest one of the broad theses of this chapter, that “the novel” and “poetry” are part of a binary system whose connecting links have been gradually strengthened since the eighteenth century, and that this binary has come to be a constitutive feature of our thinking about genre. I have already made a similar point with respect to formal innovation and sharing between the novel and narrative poetry in Chapters One through Four, but here I want to make a different kind of argument about the changes to the subjective experience of reading. Thus, I will focus on how the experience of reading is related to, or leads to, the cognitive procedure of generic categorization (the effects of which are then reflected back into the experience of reading), and analyze not only how, but why, the categories of poetry and

the novel have served as the site of contested ground in the historical perception of genre. To that end, I will throughout this chapter be pursuing the following historical and conceptual claims: first, that the novel and poetry have always, since the inception of the novel itself, been bound to each other; second, that this binding is reflected both at the level of the experience of reading and within theorization of the categories of “the novel” and “poetry”; and third, that the territories claimed by each component in this binary generic system have been gradually shifting since the Romantic period, and that the effects of this are demonstrable both within theories of poetry and the novel and in reported experiences of reading them.

I begin, however, with the central organizational focus, and puzzle, of the chapter—the history of the experience of reading Lord Byron’s *Don Juan*. The reception history of *Don Juan* is one of the most fascinating and substantial examples of the changes to the reported experience of reading poetry and the novel since the Romantic period. *Fascinating*, because while it is today widely categorized as a novel, its reception in the nineteenth century was more often than not characterized by perplexity, with readers refusing to count it as a poem; *substantial* because, as one of the most-read and discussed poems of the last two hundred years, there is an enormous archive of recorded responses to the changing experience of reading it. In the process of piecing together this history of reception (both peculiar and representative), I hope, on the one hand, to shed light on the historically variable experience of reading “poetry” and “the novel,” and, on the other hand, to begin to establish that the relationship among these particular genre terms is a defining feature of our experiences of reading over the last two hundred years.

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Before entering into the presentation of primary historical data, it may be useful to say a brief word about historiographical methodology and how I intend to employ it both in the identification, and explanation, of historical variations in the perception of genre. Broadly speaking, I see myself as employing a version of Jamesonian “metacommentary,” “according to which our object of study is less the text itself than the interpretations through which we attempt to confront and to appropriate it.”<sup>206</sup> That said, some immediate qualifications are in order. Rather than unearthing “sedimented” layers of historicized “interpretation,” I intend to explore *surfaces* and the historical changes to their *appearances* or *perception*. And therefore, as opposed to employing Jameson’s metaphor of the “unconscious” of texts, it would be more accurate to think of this project as examining the history of developments in *pre-conscious*—or, say, just *barely conscious*—experience in the reading of texts. I do, however, wish to maintain a loose affiliation with Jamesonian dialectical thinking, primarily in the sense that “historical reflexivity” entails an interest in the cognitive procedures that we employ in the process of determining meaning. But a focus on historical dimensions of “the concepts and categories . . . that we necessarily bring to the object” becomes a different kind of project when these concepts and categories are themselves determinative of the kind of object we are analyzing.<sup>207</sup> Whether we think *Don Juan* is a poem (or *not* a poem) or a novel strongly affects our understanding of its meaning, and our experience of it as pleasurable or disagreeable. This is a circular process—because *how* we experience reading also strongly affects our tendency to characterize it as one kind of writing or another—but the

point is that generic categorization is to a certain extent more basic than, perhaps even anterior to, the extraction of meaningful interpretations.

It is also important at the outset to note that, while the concepts of both “poetry” (as lyric) and “the novel” (as prose fiction) have been expanding and taking over the finer distinctions that at an earlier historical moment may have been easier to apprehend, there has also long been a tendency or a desire among readers to distinguish absolutely between the two. This felt need to say for sure that a work is one or the other—poetry or the novel, poetry or prose—appears everywhere in nineteenth century thinking. This is *especially* true, as I’ll detail in a later section, in works by thinkers who are specifically interested in acknowledging, for example, that poetry of the highest order can be found in the prose of a novel, or that poetic-seeming writing can in fact be prosaic. It appears that as a variety of thinkers came increasingly to think of the distinction between poetry and prose as being determined by much more than meets the eye, they were at the same time committed to establishing that there is in fact an important and fundamental difference between the two.

As I said, the details of this latter claim are too involved to get into here where I mean to be discussing the methodological commitments and intentions of this chapter, but it is useful to acknowledge it early on because it helps to clarify the need for an additional, or at least complementary, methodological wrinkle. That’s because by pursuing the history of readers’ willingness or ability to identify a work as a “poem,” or *not* poetic, or a “novel,” I also want to be raising questions about what Jacques Rancière has identified as “the distribution of the sensible,” or “the system of *a priori* forms determining what presents itself to sense experience” in both politics and aesthetics.<sup>208</sup>

“Art,” broadly speaking, is a category that admits or denies certain objects based variously on a “mode of experience,” “modes of perception,” “thought patterns” and so on that “make it possible for words, shapes, movements and rhythms to be felt and thought as art.”<sup>209</sup> It will be my argument in this chapter that genre perceptions, particularly those that are brought to bear on the novel-poetry binary, are also part of—or at least can be usefully understood as depending on similar kinds of processes as—this same history of *Aisthesis*, the complex weave of mental procedures by which we determine whether a given object is art or not-art.

It may be useful, on this point, to distinguish my present interest in the historical variation in perceptions of genre from my earlier discussion (in Chapters One and Four) which was more focused on the difficulties of perceiving *formal* interrelations among separate genres. The two lines of inquiry are of course not unrelated—the inability to perceive generic interrelation that I previously argued was a function of the emergence of the genre concept of the novel certainly plays an important role in the felt need to distinguish absolutely between poetry and the novel, and highlights both the importance and the difficulty of investigating the ways in which they have related to each other in literary history. But because I am not here tracking formal interrelations among complex literary objects, but instead am interested in the way these objects *seem* to belong to one genre or another, it is now important to employ a vocabulary that more specifically focuses on human responses to texts rather than one that highlights the internal workings of their formal machinery. In this regard using Rancière’s conceptual framework provides certain advantages—even if only as a jumping off point. Because what I wish to track here belongs, to a certain extent, to a history of human thought that can no longer be

immediately accessed. We no longer remember what it was like to read a book and think it was poetical, or novelistic, in the way the Romantics did. In fact, one of the themes of this chapter is that the perceptions of readers throughout the nineteenth century were in a kind of unprecedented flux, where newer readers could not see or understand what older readers had once taken as a given.

Consider, for example, the relatively early commentary of Walter Bagehot, who in 1864 was already attempting to revise the way Victorian readers perceived the generic attributes (and positive value) of the writers of the previous generation. Writing about Romantic poetry in general, he observes that “almost the sole result of the poetry of that time is the harm which it has done,” blaming Byron in particular for producing “a metrical species of sensation novel” that “were received with an avidity that resembles our present avidity for sensation novels, and were read by a class which at present reads little but such novels.”<sup>210</sup> Bagehot was perhaps attempting to force the issue in a way that did not, or did not yet, have wide appeal (though it is worth noting that this particular critique was reprinted again in 1879), but he helps us to see that the fight over Byron was at least in part a controversy over what kind of genre his writing *seemed* to be. He also helps to highlight the importance of employing a methodology that tracks specifically the way generic perceptions could and did change throughout history.

## **II. What *Don Juan* Was Not**

In October of 1821, after having read the second installment of *Don Juan* (cantos III-V), Percy Shelley excitedly wrote to Byron to praise what he took to be the poem’s unparalleled genius:



It is a poem totally of its own species, & my wonder and delight at the grace of the composition no less than the free & grand vigour of the conception of it perpetually increase. . . . Nothing has ever been written like it in English—nor if I may venture to prophesy, will there be; without carrying upon it the mark of a secondary and borrowed light.<sup>211</sup>

In December of the same year, in response to the same set of cantos, the *British Review* excoriated the poem—but in terms that, like Shelley’s, insist on *Don Juan* being so unique as to be virtually incomprehensible according to categories (moral, aesthetic, philosophical) that are typically brought to bear on poetry. Declaring that the poem’s moral cynicism is “an unnatural and anomalous case in the history of the mind,” the entirely flummoxed reviewer worries that “characterizing a performance like that before us” imposes a “labour” of “no common difficulty. It offers no proper subject for criticism. There is nothing for discrimination, nothing for correction, nothing for disquisition.”<sup>212</sup> Despite their rather different estimates of the value of Cantos III-V of *Don Juan*, both Shelley and the *British Review* are surprisingly in agreement about one thing: that whatever *Don Juan* is, it requires a language not yet spoken, or concepts not yet formed, to be understood properly. This “new species” of writing is beyond “criticism,” “discrimination,” and “disquisition”; it resembles nothing from the past, “nor if I may venture to prophesy,” will it meet its like in the future. The emphatic *nothingness* whose discrimination eludes the best skills of the *British Review* is matched by Shelley’s “perpetually increas[ing]” “wonder and delight” that accompanies him as he experiences a previously untrodden region of the literary arts.

The conviction that *Don Juan* was unprecedented in the history of writing—and therefore in need of a term other than “poetry” to comprehend its salient features—is but one component of a broader set of responses to the reading of *Don Juan* that together form an identifiable pattern of negation or repudiation. Rather than amounting to one claim—that *Don Juan*, whatever it is, is not a poem—the negating impulse instead takes form in a diverse set of responses, each motivated by its own sense of what is most important about *Don Juan*. Thus, *Don Juan* is not a poem *because*: it is immoral, unmanly, poorly written, little more than lineated prose, philosophically dubious, and so on. This range of response-types that would eject *Don Juan* from the company of other poems or “poetry” is significant in and of itself, and needs to be understood as much for the specific terms by which it negates *Don Juan*’s status as a poem as it does for contributing to (and reflecting) a general movement towards changing the categories by which we evaluate poetry today. Thus, in this section I will work to reconstruct the responses to *Don Juan*, not as a way of excavating the specific politics, or theories of poetry, morality, and masculinity that they are expressive of, but simply to draw attention to the surprising convergence of all these theories in a shared sense that *Don Juan* cannot be thought of as being a poem.

Because the reception of Byron’s poetry in general, and his *Don Juan* in particular, is so vast, I will in the sub-sections below attempt to group response-types into loosely-defined categories. While these groupings have a certain intuitive appeal to them, they should not be taken for anything more than useful heuristic tools. In fact, as will become obvious, there is at times significant overlap among specific instances of response-types. Nonetheless, they are useful because they help us to see what might not otherwise be

obvious: that a general negating impulse constituted not only a wide range of responses to the poem, but also that it is active in the minds of many readers whose responses might otherwise not seem to have anything to do with each other.

### **(i) The Basic Template**

I begin with an uncharacteristically long review of Cantos I and II published by a relatively minor journal, the *Edinburgh Monthly Review*, in October of 1819.<sup>213</sup> While its length is uncharacteristic, it is useful for the way it methodically presents many different kinds of responses that would themselves come to be typical articulations of the negating impulse. Thus, as I rehearse the narrative of this review, I'll also indicate, where relevant, how its various strains can be detected in many other contemporaneous reviews of *Don Juan*. It is also useful to begin with the *Edinburgh Monthly Review*'s notice of Cantos I and II—published shortly after the appearance of the cantos themselves—because it indicates how even the earliest responses to the poem denied it standing as a poem. Moreover, because the *Edinburgh Monthly Review* was a minor journal that struggled with low readership, there is little possibility that *these* particular reviews were the cause, or disproportionately influential upon, the form of negation taken by later responses.

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One of the most obviously offensive features of *Don Juan*, appearing in early cantos as well as late, is its cynical and oftentimes sneering critique of the conventions of morality and the religious principles on which they are ostensibly based. More often than not, reviews refused to print the offending lines, choosing instead only to hint at the evils

contained within them. But, while the specific content of Byron's irreligious verse was left to the reader's imagination, the *effects* of it on the generic status of *Don Juan* are regularly spelled out in some detail. Thus, the *Edinburgh Monthly Review* thinks that "it is impossible . . . that Byron can be ignorant of how much he . . . loses as a poet and a man of genius" by denying what "he must know": namely, that "the highest spirit of poetry lives to give form and reality" to "the sentiments of religion." This is true even in "the cradle of the divine art" of poetry—the "rude and early periods of society"—when "skepticism . . . is unknown, and where the voice of nature speaks, even amid the most fantastic of mythical aberrations, of that immortality which civilization dares to doubt or despise." Poetry is, and always has been, interwoven with religious feeling; to deny religion is to deny poetry.<sup>214</sup>

Not only does poetry necessarily partake of the religious spirit, but so too does poetic inspiration. Thus,

while the inspiration of the poet is full upon us, we shall be forced to acknowledge that the elements of supernatural power . . . are of surpassing energy in their influence upon human nature, and are fitted to kindle such sublime emotions as no other secret of the poetic art can ever supply.<sup>215</sup>

The implication of these remarks about poetry and poetic inspiration is clear: whatever Byron has produced in the first two cantos of *Don Juan*, it is not "poetry," and was not the product of poetic "inspiration." It is something else entirely, not worthy of the name of the "poetic art."

In declaring *Don Juan* to be too "blasphemous" to be described according to the categories that have hitherto comprehended "great works" in "the history of our

literature,” *The Edinburgh Monthly Review* raises a question, here only implicitly gestured at, about just what, if not a poem, *Don Juan* is?<sup>216</sup> This, it turns out, was no simple question for contemporary reviewers. *The British Critic*, one of Byron’s fiercest critics, raises this question in specifically generic terms:

. . . If *Don Juan* be not a satire—what is it? A more perplexing question could not be put to the critical squad. Of the four hundred and odd stanzas which the [first] two Cantos contain, not a tittle could, even in the utmost latitude of interpretation, be dignified by the name of poetry. It has not wit enough to be comic; it has not spirit enough to make it lyric; nor is it didactic of anything but mischief. The versification and morality are about upon par; as far therefore as we are enabled to give it any character at all, we should pronounce it a narrative of degrading debaucher in doggerel rhyme.<sup>217</sup>

Two years later, assuming a slightly less pugnacious tone, the *European Magazine* would write that cantos III-V of *Don Juan* “realize none of the legitimate objects of poetry.”<sup>218</sup> And, writing about cantos XII-XIV, the *Literary Sketch-Book* declares that “It would be a vain task to attempt to analyse a work, either in a literary or a critical style, that holds all the laws of literature and criticism at defiance.”<sup>219</sup> Since *Don Juan* does not obey the laws of literature or judgment, it is therefore somehow beyond description in terms that *do* obey these laws. It is “perplexing” not simply because of its immorality, but also because that immorality is *sui generis* and decidedly *not* the kind of immorality that could apply to poetry.

Interestingly, the reviewer for the *Literary Sketch-Book* is aware of the apparent incoherence in his judgment, the claim that *Don Juan* is for the most part not a poem.<sup>220</sup> After writing that “the description of the country seat is . . . the only poetical passage in the whole of” cantos XII-XIV, the reviewer goes on to imagine what his readers might think of this:

‘And is it possible,’ some of our readers may exclaim, ‘that Lord Byron can write above three hundred stanzas, out of which not a dozen can be called really poetical?’ If anyone should doubt the fact, let him read the book and convince himself.<sup>221</sup>

Writing in 1829, John Henry Newman repeats and clarifies the logic of the *Literary Sketch-Book*:

There is an ambiguity in the word ‘poetry’, which is taken to signify both the gift itself, and the written composition which is the result of it. Thus there is an apparent, but no real contradiction, in saying a poem may be but partially poetical; in some passages more so than in others; and sometimes not poetical at all. We only maintain, not that the writers forfeit the name of a poet who fail at times to answer to our requisitions, but that they are poets only so far forth, and inasmuch as the do answer them. . . . Sometimes, on the other hand, while we do not deny the incidental beauty of a poem, we are ashamed and indignant on witnessing the unworthy substance in which that beauty is imbedded. This remark applies strongly to the immoral compositions to which Lord Byron devoted his last years.<sup>222</sup>

Just as the *Literary Sketch-Book* concludes its logic-chopping by referring to what they take to be a common and necessary element to the experience of reading *Don Juan*, so too does Newman, eventually, reveal that the basis of his reading of Byron is based on the “shame” he experiences when “witnessing the unworthy substance in which that beauty is imbedded.” Where argumentation fails, readerly experience is the final court of appeal. And, as each of these reviews appears to suggest, the historical experience of reading *Don Juan* was characterized both by a confusion about what it was, and by a conviction that most of it was not poetry.

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Before he wrote *Don Juan*—and, indeed, during many of the years in which he was publishing it—there was great faith and hope that Byron might very well develop into the greatest poet of his age. Portions of his earlier works had been judged harshly, but, until the second or third installment of *Don Juan*, there remained a general sense of optimism that Byron would eventually come to his senses and write a work worthy of the best living poet in England. The disappointment reviewers felt in reading his work, therefore, was rather severe. While many reviewers of *Don Juan* took time to articulate theories of what poetry is (or isn’t) in the process of rendering their judgment, these abstract meditations are rarely sufficient to express the anger and disgust that characterized the vast majority of contemporary responses. Disgust, and the variety of objects that can inspire it—from bodily deformities and filth, to poison, and even illegitimate children—constitutes a significant strain in the basic template for the tendency of repudiating *Don Juan* as a poem.

In the same review of Cantos I and II, the *Edinburgh Monthly Review* is not content simply to assert the essential relation between poetry and religion, and leave it at that. Rather, they draw explicit attention to the powerful disgust that accompanies the experience of reading *Don Juan*, rating it even more vexing than the experience of reading *Beppo*:

Beppo was in many parts reprehensible, but Don Juan is scandalous throughout. . . . But the vices even of Beppo are venial, compared with those of the poem before us. . . . We can never, in any circumstances, become unmindful of the poet's claim upon our admiration; but we must confess, that even the glory of Byron appears to sicken and fade away before these poisoned strains.<sup>223</sup>

The experience of disgust itself is only part of the difficulty this reviewer feels in articulating his response. Because, alongside of that feeling is another of “admiration” for Byron in general—a feeling that would vex other reviewers who could neither dismiss the beauties nor ignore the severe defects of *Don Juan*. In 1821 the *Imperial Magazine* would underscore the apparent magic of these beauties, seemingly summoned by “an enchanter's wand,” which are confusingly intermixed with and productive of the poem's “exquisitely disgusting details.”<sup>224</sup> Rather than amounting to (or disguising themselves as) a considered decision about what poetry is or should be, these reviews baldly express the powerful and irreconcilable emotional responses that caused readers to categorize the poem as importantly different from the kinds of things that they were comfortable accepting as poetic.



In their notice of Cantos I and II, the *Miniature Magazine* makes the relation between disgust and categorical repudiation both more explicit and, as with many critical reviews of *Don Juan*, more confused:

The graceful ease and nervous strength which appear in all his works, the gaiety of ‘Beppo,’ and the seriousness of ‘Childe Harold,’ are here so admirably intermixed as to form (could we banish for a moment from our mind the recollection of the pollution which is so closely combined with it throughout) the most beautiful specimen of poetry extant in our language.<sup>225</sup>

This self-contradicting sentence raises a question that it at once dismisses—or renders a judgment that it simultaneously qualifies. On the one hand *Don Juan* contains the best of everything Byron has previously written, amounting to “the most beautiful specimen of poetry extant in our language.” No small praise when the language in question can claim the works of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, among other greats. On the other hand, the *Miniature Magazine* cannot “banish for a moment from our mind the recollection of the pollution” that prevents the cantos from being what they otherwise are (or should be). Two years later, the *Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany* would without any equivocation indicate why the disgust of *Don Juan* (this time cantos III-V) prevents it from being a poem:

Here is my Lord Byron, doubtless one of the most extraordinarily gifted intellectual men of the day, again enacting the part of DON JUAN again, poisoning the fine current of poetry, by the intermixture of ribaldry and

blasphemy such as no man of pure taste can read a *second* time, and such as no woman of correct principles could read the *first*.<sup>226</sup>

This review makes explicit what the others have kept implicit: *Don Juan* isn't a poem *per se*—it is instead a pollutant, a poison that is infecting the “fine current of poetry.” It may appear to be poem-like, but it is, at best a “poisoned strain,” a host for a sickness that may (it was feared) spread throughout the vulnerable body of poetry before its host “sicken[s] and fade[s] away” for good.<sup>227</sup>

## **(ii) Poetry vs. Prose**

Despite the common twentieth-century tendency to read *Don Juan* as if it were a novel (or novel-in-verse), there is relatively little evidence for this kind of response in the nineteenth century, and none during Byron's lifetime. One exception is John Galt's 1830 *Life of Lord Byron*, in which he asserts that *Don Juan* “is a professedly epic poem, . . . it may more properly be described as a poetical novel.”<sup>228</sup> Galt doesn't offer a detailed justification for this judgment—a brief generality about the “amazing firmness and freedom” with which “the characters are sketched” is the extent of it—and instead relies on the apparent intuitiveness of the statement. Surely this is an important early example of reading *Don Juan* as a novel, but it appears to be a generic perception that doesn't truly catch on until much later, in the twentieth century.

There is, however, another strain in nineteenth-century experiences of reading that would deny *Don Juan* status as a poem by insisting on its essentially prosaic or prose-like nature. The *Gentleman's Magazine*, for example, declared that the two publications—one after the other—of Cantos VI-VIII and IX-XI are “incomparably the most abominable in

spirit, and wretched in execution, of all the writings of the author.” In fact, “many of the verses are merely disjointed prose; clipped into stanzas of eight lines each, without the least regard to their euphony.”<sup>229</sup> In their review of canto IX-XI in the same month, the *Edinburgh Magazine* would sound a similar note:

These cantos are, in fact, nothing but measured prose, replete with bad puns, stale jests, small wit, indecency, and irreligion, and exhibiting none of those redeeming bursts of true poetical inspiration for which their predecessors were remarkable.<sup>230</sup>

And, in their review of cantos VI-VIII the *Literary Gazette* declared that, at best, Byron “cleverly manages to turn prose into indifferent verse,” while cantos IX-XI can only be spoken of “in plain prose: not unlike itself.”<sup>231</sup>

The *Literary Gazette* deserves special attention here because they perform an unusual and particularly interesting form of the prose-critique/response. Both in their review of Cantos VI-VIII and of Cantos XV-XVI there are moments when, apparently so offended by the “pointless and unpoetical” writings of Byron, that they *de-lineate* the verses when they quote them in their review: “As the writer offers his own apology for several of the offences imputed to him, we shall transcribe it in his own unmusical rhythm, but not in [‘meted’] lines.”<sup>232</sup> Thus, in separate reviews, the reviewers format the first three stanzas of Canto VII, and the first ten stanzas of Canto XV as paragraphs and sentences without line breaks, so that they appear visually the way they supposedly read (see figure 5.1). This way of de-lineating the verse of Byron is made to stand out all the more because elsewhere in these same reviews (and in their other reviews of Byron / *Don Juan*) the lineation of Byron’s verse is strictly observed.

While declaring a poem prosaic, and therefore not poetic, was not entirely unknown in the nineteenth century—in 1800 Wordsworth complained about the “numerous class of critics who, when they stumble upon these prosaisms as they call them, imagine that they have made a notable discovery, and exult over the Poet as over a man ignorant of his own profession”—it does not appear to have been a common experience in the reading of the first two cantos of *Don Juan*.<sup>233</sup> Indeed, it was common to at least attempt to separate the non-poetic wheat from the poetic chaff in the first installments of the poem, with many critics praising the “rich poetic vein” that “ran through” “some of the earlier” cantos.<sup>234</sup>

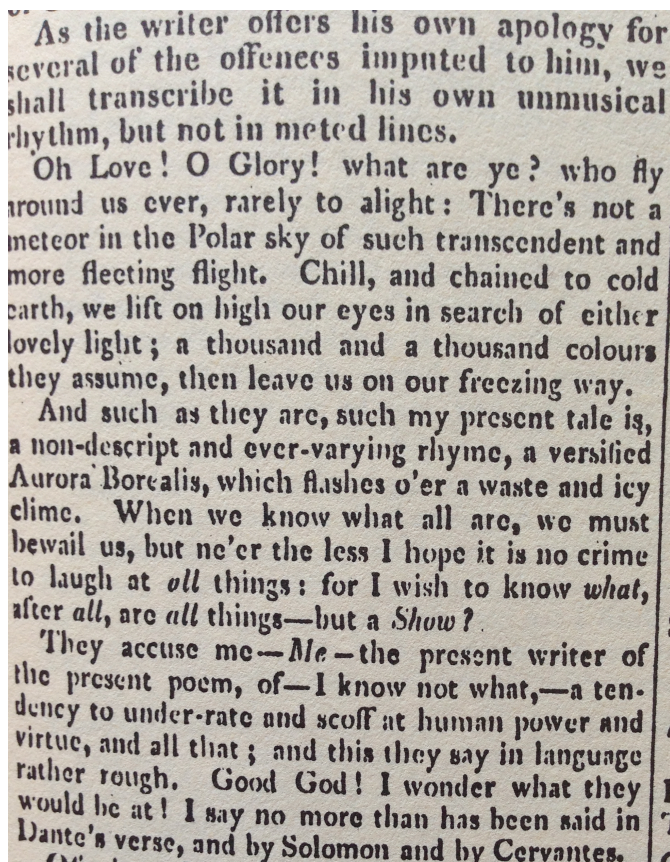


Figure 5.1 The *Literary Gazette* de-lineates Byron's verses into paragraphs.

The emergence, therefore, of the prose-response to later cantos of *Don Juan* raises two interesting possibilities: (1) that Byron's style as a poet drifts further and further away from the accepted norms of versification as he continues to write *Don Juan*; and (2) that as readers continued to struggle with confusion and disgust as they read new installments of the consistently blasphemous *Don Juan*, they eventually learned to express their feeling that it was not poetry by instead claiming that it was prose. (A related possibility—say 2a—would be that readers began to understand that what they were reacting against in *Don Juan* was, at least in part, that it felt to them more like prose than poetry.) These hypotheses are by no means mutually exclusive, and I shall return to them at the close of this chapter when I consider possible explanations of the changing perception of *Don Juan*'s genre.

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However we explain the development of the prose-categorization in particular, or the negating impulse in general, one thing is certain: by the end of the nineteenth century there was a growing awareness that the logic of denial had emerged from its origins in readerly experience and had begun to form into a recognizable, public discourse. The emergence of the discourse was itself felt to be recent. In the words of John Addington Symonds in his preface to a selection of Byron's poems in *The English Poets* (1880),

The change of opinion which has taken place among cultivated people during the last half century in this respect, is so striking, that no critic of Byron can avoid discussing it. . . . During his lifetime he enjoyed a renown

which has rarely fallen to the lot of any living writer. At the present day it is common to hear people asserting that Byron was not a true poet.<sup>235</sup>

Symonds blames the rise of a refined poetic style associated with Tennyson and Browning, which “represent as sheer a departure from Byronian precedent as it is possible to take in literature.” Thus, “the very greatness of Byron has unfitted him for an audience educated in this different school of poetry.”<sup>236</sup> While the formulation from the earlier part of the nineteenth century had been something like *whatever Don Juan is, it is not poetry*, the formulation towards the close of the century appears to be *whatever poetry was, it is not that way any longer*.

Perhaps the best indicator that readers at the end of the nineteenth century were less likely to even try to read Byron as a poet is Algernon Charles Swinburne’s claim, in 1884, that

When we come to consider the case of Byron, we must allow it to be wholly undeniable that some sort of claim to some other kind of merit than that gift for writing poetry must be discovered or devised for him, if any place among memorable men is to be reserved for him at all.<sup>237</sup>

Indeed, Swinburne considers the ease with which Byron’s poetry is translated into prose not to be a great fault, but instead to be its greatest achievement. Speaking specifically about *Childe Harold*, he writes

What shall be said of a poet whose work not only does not lose, but gains, by translation into prose? and gains so greatly and indefinitely by that process as to assume a virtue which it has not? . . . . The blundering, floundering, lumbering and stumbling stanzas, transmuted into prose and

transfigured into grammar, reveal the real and latent force of rhetorical energy that it is in them...<sup>238</sup>

While he is undoubtedly a “king by truly divine right,” Byron may only claim his throne “in a province outside the proper domain of absolute poetry.” By the time the negating impulse reaches its apex in popular opinion at the end of the nineteenth century—when it is no longer even a contested claim that Byron was not a poet—the ground has been seeded for *Don Juan*’s eventual emergence as a novel. In a history of generic perception that proceeds at an uneven rate, where there are few if any definitive turning points, this is as close as we can get to directly seeing the category shifting between poetry and the novel.<sup>239</sup>

### III. Becoming a Novel

Around the turn of the twentieth century there was new optimism that Byron’s reputation was ripe for a thorough re-evaluation. The overwhelming negativity of what Samuel Chew called “The Decline of Byronism” (approximately 1830-1880) had apparently run its course, and it was increasingly difficult for readers to find fault either in his flouting of social conventions or in his difference from the major Victorian poets who displaced him.<sup>240</sup> In an 1898 essay entitled “The Byron Revival,” W. P. Trent observed that within the last year (1896-97) “Byron was being more discussed, if not more read” than he had in well over a decade, while, in the same year, Paul Elmer More looked forward to “The Wholesome Revival of Byron.”<sup>241</sup> New editions of Byron’s letters and poetry had been recently published—to generally favorable reviews—and no less than two rival publishers promised future critical editions of Byron’s complete

works.<sup>242</sup> Thus, although “the majority of our critics and men of culture . . . continue to keep their faces turned away from [Byron] . . . at present,” there was a tentative faith that, in the future, Byron might “come once more into favor.”<sup>243</sup>

The most significant development in the reception of Byron was that he had come to be thought of as “the ‘voice in chief’ of his generation.”<sup>244</sup> As early as 1919, it was commonplace to declare that *Don Juan* in particular was “the most characteristic poem of the nineteenth century,” and that it was “a brilliant picture of life and society”—a view of Byron’s masterpiece that has stayed with us through the twenty-first century.<sup>245</sup> But the terms of this re-evaluation remained general—critics praised Byron’s individualism, passion, humor, critical spirit, and so on—and alongside the belief that *Don Juan* “voice[d] its author and his age” was the familiar notion that it was “*sui generis*.”<sup>246</sup> Thus, even as the reputation of *Don Juan* was, along with its author, in the midst of a revival, there continued to be some uncertainty about how precisely to categorize *Don Juan* with respect to other kinds of literature. One symptom of this uncertainty, in the words of Oliver Elton in 1920, is that “Byron’s lot amongst our poets has been to include in his public many persons who care little for other poetry than his, or even, as some may add, for poetry at all.”<sup>247</sup>

For his part, Elton attempted to explain the unique popularity of Byron among readers who otherwise don’t care for poetry by reference to what he took to be Byron’s superior prose style:

From the first he expressed himself faithfully in prose; and before long perfectly. . . . At length he attained a poetic style that nearly approaches to his prose style. Byron’s artistic history lies in that sentence. But to say this



is not to give up his title as a poet. On the contrary, his prose itself is worthy of a poet; and further, when he uses it for verse he adds the glory of poetry to his material.<sup>248</sup>

What began in the nineteenth century as a critique of the proximity of Byron's poetry to the prosaic has, by the twentieth century, come to be seen as his essential strength. And this is not merely, as it was with Swinburne, a way of attempting to reconcile a dislike for Byron's poetry with the sense that he still must somehow be considered great. Rather, Byron's *success*, the measure of his relevance to a twentieth-century audience, is the extent to which he has always been able to channel the spirit of prose through his poetry.<sup>249</sup> And, not incidentally, the only poem in which Elton believed that "Byron expresse[d] himself entirely without hindrance" was *Don Juan*—it was there, and there alone, that "the spirit of his prose" was able to "find its true medium."<sup>250</sup>

Still, there is an important difference between "prose" and "the novel," and Elton does not wish to claim all of *Don Juan* as a novel. He does, however, provide a rather early example of the view that in the so-called "English cantos," Byron "sat down to join the novelists."<sup>251</sup> In Canto XI Juan arrives in England and, in Canto XII through the end of what was completed of Canto XVII before Byron's death, the poem focuses on Juan's social involvement with a group of British aristocrats during a long stay at their country estate. Chaste flirting, the possibility of sexual intrigue, and love triangles ensue—all of which has in the twentieth century been interpreted as being particularly *novelistic* in a way that the rest of *Don Juan* is not. In 1966, Karl Kroeber argued that the final cantos were key to understanding not how *Don Juan* is the "slap-happy successor to *Tom Jones*," but rather how it "adumbrate[s] the new style in the novel form."<sup>252</sup> In these cantos, "Juan

loses all resemblance to a picaresque,” and finally “becomes something like a Jamesian ‘central intelligence,’ a lens for focusing and illuminating the action of others.”<sup>253</sup> And, as the representation of a character and his relation to society change, so too does Byron’s style come to “anticipate . . . the highly personalized and tonally flexible prose of the nineteenth-century novel.”<sup>254</sup> With the focus on what was new and different about the English cantos, we see, for the first time, the emergence of a discourse that analyzes *Don Juan* as a novel specifically with respect to what was thought to be unique (and pleasurable) about novels themselves.<sup>255</sup>

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There are, of course, important twentieth-century readings of *Don Juan* as a novel that do not distinguish between early cantos and late cantos, or alterations in style as the poem progresses—but rather that seek to use *Don Juan* as an example in a larger theory of the novel as such. This can be seen, for example, in Georg Lukács’ *The Theory of the Novel* (1920), in which he discusses the transformations it was necessary for the epic to undergo before it could become a novel, and relevant for a modern era where a “pre-stabilised harmony” is no longer a given. “Verse,” he writes, “is banished from the great epic, or else it transforms itself, unexpectedly and unintentionally, into lyric verse.”

Only prose can then encompass the suffering and the laurels, the struggle and the crown, with equal power; only its unfettered plasticity and its non-rhythmic rigour can, with equal power, embrace the fetters and the freedom, the given heaviness and the conquered lightness of a world henceforth immanently radiant with found meaning.

And yet, Lukács goes on to say that “although written in verse,” *Don Juan* and Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin* “belong to the company of the great humorous novels.”<sup>256</sup> Thus, despite the transformation of verse into lyric, and the adoption of prose by the epic, there are two important poetic examples that defy, while at the same time confirming, Lukács’ theory of the kind of novelistic writing that is required for the modern age.

Lukács’ *Theory* is heavily indebted to Hegelian philosophy, and so fully understanding the precise claim he’s making not only about the novel, but also about *Don Juan* would require a more expansive exegesis both of Hegel and of Lukács himself. For my present purposes, however, I’m less interested in exploring the theory of the novel that claims *Don Juan*, and more interested in the experience of reading *Don Juan* that would cause someone like Lukács to think that it was importantly different from poetry, and importantly similar to the novel.

The significance, and prevalence, of this intuition that *Don Juan* is a definitively modern novel can perhaps be most persuasively demonstrated by reference to Mikhail Bakhtin’s more or less contemporaneous theory of the novel. Bakhtin, as I discussed at greater length in Chapter One, sets up a rigid barrier between poetry and the novel, where poetry is monological and the novel, “the sole genre that continues to develop, that is as yet uncompleted” is structured by heteroglossia.<sup>257</sup> He does, however, allow that “in an era when the novel reigns supreme, almost all the remaining genres are to a greater or lesser extent ‘novelized’,” with particular examples including “*Childe Harold* and especially Byron’s *Don Juan*.”<sup>258</sup> Like Bakhtin’s conception of the novel itself, “novelized genres” are indeterminate, semantically openended, “dialogized, permeated with laughter, irony, humor, self-parody” and, in short, occupy “a zone of contact with

the present in all its openendedness.”<sup>259</sup> Thus, just like Lukács, Bakhtin feels compelled to distinguish between poetry and the novel on the one hand, and to claim Byron’s narrative poem as a novel (or as being novel-like) on the other. This convergence of perception about the generic status of *Don Juan* is all the more striking when we consider that Lukács and Bakhtin—who both developed their important theories of the novel in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century—in all likelihood worked “in total isolation from each other, as if they were on different planets.”<sup>260</sup>

In a recent article, Catherine Addison has taken the Bakhtinian analysis of dialogism to its logical conclusion, arguing that “by Bakhtin’s own criteria, some verse forms are especially well designed for novelistic discourse.” Her long survey of the usage of *ottava rima*—from the Italian Renaissance, through Byron’s *Don Juan*, and finally several twentieth-century verse novels—traces the gradual process by which the *ottava rima* stanza comes to “command—or create—a dialogue of narrative voices and a plurality of viewpoints.” “In fact,” Addison argues, *ottava rima* “makes novels out of poems not intended to be novels.”<sup>261</sup> Thus, not only has Bakhtin given us an important set of terms for understanding distinct features of the novel, but also for a number of verse productions that employ the *ottava rima* stanza.

I would argue, however, that Addison has tapped into something more profound than just the applicability of novel-theoretical terminology to ostensibly non-novelistic objects; the novelization of other genres is, after all, a key component of Bakhtin’s theory. Rather, she has specified one element of poetic style that, in part because of changes in the history of its usage, but also in part because of changes in the ways in which novels and poems in general are written, now feels more novelistic than poetic. The fact that

Bakhtin's terminology can comprehend distinctive elements of *Don Juan*, therefore, is not evidence of its *novelization*—a process in the history of genre that would primarily have affected the *writing* of the poem—but rather evidence of it *having become* novelized in the minds of readers in the years since its publication. In the last two hundred years, our experiences of reading poetry and novels, and our expectations about what those experiences will be like, have changed sufficiently such that what were once poems (even, or especially, unpoetic ones) have now come to seem more like novels. In other words, the genre concept “the novel” has a history of its own that does not cease at the moment of its emergence in the middle of the eighteenth-century—and this history is interwoven with the continuing development and codification of the genre concept of “poetry” as well.

#### **IV. Towards a Theory of Generic Interrelation, Part II: Historical and Theoretical Origins of the Novel-Poetry Binary**

This brings us to the question of *why* this change in generic perception would have happened. My primary purpose so far has been to establish the fact that the perception of genre admits of a history, and to indicate that over the last two hundred years it has progressed along a continuum that connects the poles of poetry and the novel. But, the question of why the historical perception of genre should change according to this particular pattern calls for additional comment. In 1920, Elton offered a theory of the recent changes to the ways in which poetry and the novel are written that, I think, can also shed some light on the question of generic perception. He wrote that

The taste of the delicate, under the sway of Wordsworth and Tennyson, and their successors, has been led to demand from poetry a conscious nobility of thought, or a consummate finish, which Byron does not give. The frank, mocking representation of society on a large scale has been taken from poetry and given over to the novel. But the novel, in the hands of Dickens and Thackeray . . . was timid beside *Don Juan*—as timid in comment and topic. . . . Poetry may have become a franker record of casuistical passions and intimate lusts; but it has never again broadened to the business of depicting battles and seraglios and the high comedy of intrigue.<sup>262</sup>

To this list of once-poetic elements that have since the writing of *Don Juan* migrated into the novel, we might also add that the elements of a strong narrative, of story as such, and characterization are now almost entirely claimed by the domain of the novel as well. This is to say nothing of the high seriousness—what Elton calls the “conscious nobility of thought”—that typically characterizes the lyric mode, while the easy pleasures of humor, wit, and vulgar irony can still be found in a great number of novels.

Readers have long emphasized that Byron’s particular facility with elements of plot, suspense, and humorous presentation, is a key element to the appreciation of reading *Don Juan*. Thus, in response to Cantos III-V, a reader of the *Gentleman’s Magazine* wrote a letter to the editor to praise *Don Juan* specifically for its excellence in storytelling:

Reading *long* poems in the old solemn decasyllabics, is actually swimming down Lethe, where we cannot get far without making for the

shore, lest we should fall asleep and be drowned. But the sprightly measure adopted by Lord Byron, relieved as it is by scintillations of wit, lively digressions, and the colloquial form, renders a long poem merely a story, told in a very dramatic, pleasant, attractive manner.<sup>263</sup>

Over a hundred years later M. K. Joseph would sound a similar note, writing that “the narrative [of *Don Juan*] is a considerable asset in itself: it is the sustaining element which makes the whole poem possible, the picture from which the garrulous narrator takes off and to which he returns.”<sup>264</sup> Even today, first-time readers of *Don Juan* may be surprised to find that they actually *like* reading it, in part because they do not expect poetry to be the kind of genre that wraps up its reader in character psychology, plot, and so on. These basic elements of storytelling can be found in a variety of popular media today—including television shows, movies, and even investigative reporting—but in the realm of literature they are expected to be found only in novels, and specifically *not* in poetry. Thus, the background against which we categorize the literary objects we are consuming has changed. *Don Juan* continues to confuse readers about just what kind of literary object it is, but instead of wondering how it *isn't* a poem contemporary readers are struck by the way in which it *is* like a novel.

Without dismissing what I otherwise take to be a plausible argument—that we no longer read like the Romantics because we no longer write like the Romantics—I want to insist that there is an even deeper conceptual and historical explanation for the forces that have bound poetry and the novel into a binary system. It's not simply, or not just, the case that because we have changed the way we read and write that *Don Juan* is now often thought of as a novel. Rather, as I want to argue at greater length in this section, the

foundations of the concept of the novel itself have always been connected to poetry, and developments in theoretical understandings of poetry in the wake of the rise of the novel have continuously been framed not incidentally but essentially in terms of poetry's relation (or non-relation) to prose and the novel. In short, while it might seem that *Don Juan*'s history of reception is *peculiar*, I want to claim it as *representative*, indicating the true shape or organization of our concepts of poetry and the novel.

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In 1779, Samuel Johnson looked back over a century in time to take measure of the importance of John Dryden for the present age. His conclusion is that Dryden's absolutely primary importance could scarcely be overstated. That's because, as Johnson claims, the concepts of contemporary criticism—so common as to be virtually determinative of the framework in which modern readers experience and assess contemporary writing—were unthinkable before Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poetry* (1668). Thus, while it is true that “he who, having formed his opinions in the present age of English literature, turns back to peruse this dialogue will not perhaps find much increase of knowledge or much novelty of instruction,” Johnson claims that this only *appears* to be the case because it was Dryden himself who bequeathed to a new age its foundational principles of literary understanding.<sup>265</sup> Not only did he establish the rules for a truly “new versification” (which were opposed to a “former savageness” towards which “English poetry has [since then] had no tendency to relapse”), he is also responsible for discovering “those happy combinations of words which distinguish poetry from prose” which “had been rarely attempted” before his time.<sup>266</sup>



Johnson's point isn't simply that the importance of Dryden's contribution has begun to slip from memory, but rather that it has become increasingly difficult to recognize what about it counts *as* a contribution. His creation of a new common sense displaced an older, murkier, form of common sense (Johnson might call it common senselessness), and so what appears now to have always been true is in fact a product of a definite moment in history. Johnson's constant insistence (evident everywhere in his criticism) on assessing an author "by transport[ing] ourselves to his time, and examin[ing] what were the wants of his contemporaries, and what were his means of supplying them" puts him in a position to attempt to think in terms other than those that to a certain extent limit the range of his historical imagination, and allows to him to perceive a past that might be invisible to others.<sup>267</sup> And this past was, among other things, none other than a time when we perceived the connections and disconnections between poetry and prose differently than we do now.

Without locating *the* turning point in our concepts and perceptions about poetry and prose (and, later, the novel) so definitively in a figure like Dryden, I do want to follow Johnson in identifying the turn of the eighteenth century (approximately) as the origin of the eventual emergence of the novel-poetry binary—a system of thinking that continues to determine our perceptions about genre, and that has been difficult to think around precisely because it is so foundational to many of our most basic concepts. Poetical-seeming works written during this time (*Paradise Lost*, the major works of Dryden and Alexander Pope) would later be claimed as representative examples of novelistic or prosaic writing, while novelistic- or prosaic-seeming works written during this time would later be claimed as representative examples of poetry (*Pilgrim's Progress*,

*Robinson Crusoe*). It is, moreover, a time when foundational documents about poetry's relation to prose were being written—and these discourses would later prove to be essential for the foundation of theories of what the novel is or can be, and specifically what the true relation between poetry and the novel can consist of. It is, finally, a time when the novel as a genre category was emerging, had already begun to have its effect on thinkers and writers of every stripe, but also perhaps the last time in literary history when original thinking about prose and poetry could be conceived without any relation to the novel.

Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1711), a rhyming catalogue of what he took to be critical commonplaces of the day, is a good example of a late work that conceives of the defining features of poetry without being hindered (or enabled) by thoughts of the novel. Giving voice to a view that would later become essential in the debates about the relation between poetry and the novel, he writes:

But most by numbers judge a poet's song,  
And smooth or rough, with them, is right or wrong;  
In the bright Muse though thousand charms conspire,  
Her voice is all these tuneful fools admire;  
Who haunt Parnassus but to please their ear,  
Not mend their mind; as some to church repair,  
Nor for the doctrine, but the music there.<sup>268</sup>

Pope intends to be giving practical advice both to writers and readers (critics specifically) about how to conceive of the qualities of good poetry. This is, in brief, a defense of the content of poetry, over and against the beauties of its “numbers” or “music.” But it also

drives a wedge between versification and poetry, hinting that the essential features of poetry cannot be explained by reference to form, meter, smooth appearances, or other obvious elements. Thus, while Pope is certainly not the first to formally cleave “poetry” from its visual and aural presentation, he may be the last to do so without considering what this means for its distinction from the novel.

Indeed, a fairly typical move in early theorizations of the novel is to rely on definitions, concepts, and modes of authority that are drawn from a specifically poetic tradition. Fielding, for example—a progenitor at once of the novel and novel theory—famously identifies his self-consciously new kind of writing (what he occasionally, and we constantly, have understood as a novel) as “a comic Epic-Poem in Prose,” a version of which he would repeat a few years later when he called *Tom Jones* an “Heroic, Historical, Prosaic Poem.”<sup>269</sup> Nor is his reliance on a poetic vocabulary incidental, for throughout *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749) he often justifies his decisions with respect to, or roots his analyses in the terms of, poets who he identifies as ancestors. Thus, in Book II of *Joseph Andrews*, he justifies his decision to divide his book into chapters by reference to Virgil, who “hath given us a Poem in twelve Books,” and also by invoking Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.<sup>270</sup> Elsewhere, in Book IX of *Tom Jones*, when discoursing on “those who lawfully may, and . . . those who may not, write such histories as this,” he inserts himself into a line of writers who have typically been understood to be among the greatest *poets* in history:

Homer and Milton, who, though they added the ornament of numbers to their works, were both historians of our order, were masters of all the learning of their times.<sup>271</sup>

This is not to say that Homer and Milton were literally or exactly the same kind of writers as Fielding—after all, as he repeatedly emphasizes, “I am, in reality, the founder of a new province of writing.”<sup>272</sup> Moreover, it is also worth noting that Fielding was just as likely to borrow from the vocabulary of the stage, and many other non-artistic categories (for example, that of an innkeeper, or a traveler on a long journey) in his explanations of, or justifications for, the writing he took himself to be producing. But, even here—for example when he borrows from the techniques of stagecraft to “prepare the mind of the reader for” the entrance of Sophia Western—Fielding again invokes an image of stage production that is essentially concerned with performing a poetic text. Thus, “we thought proper” to fill the mind of the reader “with every pleasing image which we can draw from the face of nature.”

And for this method we plead many precedents. First, this an art well known to, and much practised by, our tragic poets, who seldom fail to prepare their audience for the reception of their principal characters.

Making the connection between poetic technique and stage management even more explicit, Fielding goes on to identify “not only the poets, but the master of these poets, the managers of the playhouses” who have all thought such preparations were appropriate and necessary.<sup>273</sup> Thus, even as one of the earliest novelists sought to map the untrodden regions of novelistic writing, he at the same time felt compelled to do so by using navigational techniques borrowed from a number of other traditions, especially that of a poetic tradition. And, even if only because it was an unavoidable side effect of the author’s self-conscious style in which he would represent his thoughts *about* writing alongside of the writing that constituted the main plot, it is also the case that Fielding’s

readers (many of them experiencing this new form of writing for the first time) were compelled to form their concepts of what the novel is or can be based in part on allusions to older poetic concepts.

Johnson was another early reader of the novel who used specifically poetic terms to explain and understand what was distinctive about the novel. In his oft-cited *Rambler*, no. 4 essay (1750), he draws attention to the new “works of fiction with which the present generation seems more particularly delighted,” broadly suggesting that they “exhibit life in its true state, diversified only by accidents that daily happen in the world, and influenced by passions and qualities which are really to be found in conversing with mankind.” This, it almost goes without saying, is a rather efficient summary of the practices of realism and the rules of probability. But, he goes on to say that “this kind of writing may be termed not improperly the comedy of romance, and is to be conducted nearly by the rules of comic poetry.”<sup>274</sup> As with Fielding, Johnson’s views are significant not just because they shed light on the role of “poetry” in the forming of early readers and writers concepts of the novel, but also because as someone whose ideas were influential in their own right he can be expected to have encouraged this way of thinking even if it wasn’t the immediate or natural response that a reader might have.

Given the tendency among eighteenth century thinkers to identify the novelty of the novel by reference to the rules of a well-established poetic tradition, it is hardly surprising that when the next generation of thinkers would attempt to distinguish what is truly unique about poetry, over and against prose or the novel, they would do so in part by claiming novels or novelistic writing as works that are primarily poetic. If the novel had always been poetical to some degree, then whatever it is that makes poetry

essentially poetic will also occasionally be found to be wrapped into an object that otherwise has tended to be understood as a novel. This is not simply a point about how the category of poetry is interwoven into the foundational concepts of the novel, but also about how those concepts both reflected and encouraged an experience of reading. Mill, for example, who is otherwise committed to highlighting what he takes to be the natural (and universally “felt”) distinction between poetry and the novel, answers the question posed in the title of his essay, “What is Poetry?” (1833), more often than not by reference to why it can be found in the novel (without thereby also being novelistic): “Many of the finest poems are in the form of novels, and in almost all good novels there is true poetry.”<sup>275</sup>

This logic, it turns out, quite often produces analyses that are anything but clear. In his 1818 essay, “On Poetry in General,” Hazlitt at one point claims that “Pilgrim’s Progress, Robinson Crusoe, and the Tales of Boccaccio” “come as near to poetry as possible without absolutely being so,” only to immediately qualify this claim by saying that “John Bunyan and Daniel Defoe may be permitted to pass for poets in their own way.” Then, writing specifically about *Robinson Crusoe*, he claims that while “the story of his [Robinson’s] adventures would not make a poem like the *Odyssey*, it is true,” they are nonetheless presented by a “relator [who] had the true genius of a poet.” He then attempts to clarify his point by reference to the works of Samuel Richardson:

It has been made a question about whether Richardson’s romances are poetry; and the answer, perhaps is, that they are not poetry, because they are not romance. . . . Sir Charles Grandison is a coxcomb. What sort of figure would he cut, translated into an epic poem, by the side of

Achilles? . . . . Clarissa, the divine Clarissa, is too interesting by half. She is interesting in her ruffles, in her gloves, her samplers, her aunts and uncles—she is interesting in all that is uninteresting. Such things, however intensely they may be brought home to us, are not conductors to the imagination.<sup>276</sup>

A reader would not be unjustified in wondering whether, in Hazlitt's estimation, Defoe and Bunyan are in fact poets. There are also unanswered questions about Richardson. For example, does the difference between epistolarity in Richardson and first-person narration in Defoe signal the declining interest in epistolary novels because they are not poetical in the way other novels might be?

Later in the century, Matthew Arnold would publish a General Introduction to *The English Poets* (1880), in which his prefatory essay, "The Study of Poetry," would present his case for a version of Hazlitt's claim that "all is not poetry that passes for such: nor does verse make the whole difference between poetry and prose."<sup>277</sup> Thus, he writes that

We are to regard Dryden as the puissant and glorious founder, Pope as the splendid high priest, of our age of prose and reason, of our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century. For the purposes of their mission and destiny their poetry, like their prose, is admirable. Do you ask me whether Dryden's verse, take it almost where you will, is not good? . . . . I answer: Admirable for the purposes of the inaugurator of an age of prose and reason. Do you ask me whether Pope's verse, take it almost where you will, is not good? . . . . I answer: Admirable for the purposes of the high

priest of an age of prose and reason. . . . Though they may write in verse, though they may in a certain sense be masters of the art of versification, Dryden and Pope are not classics of our poetry, they are classics of our prose.<sup>278</sup>

But, almost exactly 100 years earlier, Johnson's prefaces to the works of Dryden and Pope would assert a nearly opposite assessment. Looking back another 100 years—to 1688—Johnson credits Dryden (as already noted above) with establishing the standards for “the new versification” of the modern age. And about Pope, whom Johnson inserts into a poetical hierarchy whose that locates only Milton and Dryden above him, he asks a rhetorical question that at once answers itself: “If Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found?”<sup>279</sup> We end the nineteenth century, therefore, in the exact inverse of the place where we ended the eighteenth century.

But, without making too much of the neat symmetry displayed by the works of Dryden and Pope in this history of the prose/novel-poetry binary, I want to draw attention to the significance of the overall pattern that connects each of these perhaps idiosyncratic accounts of what is or isn't a poem or a novel. And that pattern, I think, is clear enough: (1) since the eighteenth century readers, writers, and critics have tended to register gradually changing perceptions of genre, (2) those changes can most easily be registered in places where experiences of reading poetry and prose or the novel might (or did) overlap, and (3) taking account of the changes of generic perception in relation to each other suggests that their historical development has tended to fall within and to reinforce the links that bind the novel and poetry into a binary system. Not only do poetry and the novel exchange substantial amounts of territory, but also, even more fundamentally, they



exchange this territory with each other rather than with other kinds of writing. This is in part due to the much older distinction between poetry and verse, which allowed for experiences of reading that did not originate in metrical and lineated texts to be deemed poetic. That conceptual distinction created a space for prose and, eventually, the novel to enter the realm of the poetic. But it's also because the earliest readers and writers of the novel were unable or unwilling to completely distinguish the experience of reading poetry from the experience of reading the novel. It's also, as I'll explore next, a function of the particular terms in which sophisticated philosophical discussions of *the poetic* played out in Romantic-era poetic theory.

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Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1815-17) is among the most extended and methodical discussions of what was new and unique about the poetry written by him and his peers in the Romantic movement. This is especially evident in his detailed discussions of Wordsworth, whose ideas are encountered at length—variously refuted, upheld, or complicated—throughout the *Biographia*. In Chapter One I argued that Wordsworth's analysis of the essential similarity between poetry and prose is actually undermined—in a way that has been repeated in various forms since the publication of his "Preface"—by his insistence on the importance of meter. In this regard, I can be seen as following Coleridge, who was also unconvinced by Wordsworth's argument. Granting that "the formal construction, or architecture, of the words and phrases" employed in poetry and prose can in fact be essentially the same, he denies the stronger form of the argument that the *essence* of poetry and prose—"the inmost

principle of the[ir] possibility”—is the same.<sup>280</sup> Nonetheless, he does take Wordsworth’s argument seriously and his response to it is marked by an acceptance of the basic principle, crucial for discussions of poetry at this time, that “a poem contains the same elements as a prose composition”—even going so far as to grant “that a poem of any length neither can be, or ought to be, all poetry.”<sup>281</sup> Moreover, like many other thinkers, Coleridge’s analysis of poetry is rooted in what might seem to be contradictory premises: that the experience of reading poetry should determine our understanding of what it essentially is, but also that the kinds of experiences engendered by versification are merely ornamental, distracting at best.<sup>282</sup> The relevant experiences, whatever they are, must be consistent with the possibility of poetry *appearing* in prose while at the same time being essentially *different* from it.

Given his dismissal of the mere ornaments of lineation, meter, rhyme, and so on, it is perhaps surprising that he goes on to associate the uniquely poetic with a (philosophically rich) notion of meter. Meter in the strong sense, according to Coleridge, is *not* mere ornament, is not even (or necessarily) visible at the level of scansion, but instead can be “trace[d] to the balance in the mind affected by that spontaneous effort which strives to hold in check the workings of passion.”<sup>283</sup> Poetic meter is brought to bear on, or is a function of, the mind in composition—its effects indelibly mark the poetic composition *as* poetic, though it can manifest at the level of the text in a number of verbal patterns. This leads to “two legitimate conditions, which the critic is entitled to expect in every metrical work.”

First, that as the elements of metre owe their existence to a state of increased excitement, so the metre itself should be accompanied by the

natural language of excitement. Secondly, that as these elements are formed into metre artificially, by a voluntary act, with the design and for the purpose of blending delight with emotion, so the traces of present volition should throughout the metrical language be proportionally discernible. . . . There must be not only a partnership, but a union; an interpenetration of passion and of will, of spontaneous impulse and of voluntary purpose.<sup>284</sup>

At this level of abstraction, “metrical language” does not yet rise to or even imply a specific rhythm or scansion.

Coleridge, however, doesn’t always appear to keep this broadly inclusive notion of meter in mind. Thus, immediately after he presents his two conditions for metrical writing, he claims that “neither can I conceive any other answer than can be rationally given, short of this: I write in metre, because I am about to use a language different from prose.”<sup>285</sup> But Coleridge doesn’t fully appreciate the radical philosophical reach of his discussion of meter—and in this regard a comparison with Percy Shelley’s *Defence of Poetry* (1821) is particularly useful. Shelley argues that, while it is the case that “the language of poets has ever affected a certain recurrence of sound, without which it were not poetry,” it is nonetheless “*by no means essential that a poet should accommodate his language to this traditional form.*”<sup>286</sup> Meter, according to Shelley, need not be bent into “the measure of the epic, dramatic, and lyrical forms,” because it is also fundamentally at work (for example) in the way that Plato “kindle[s] a harmony in thoughts divested of shape and action,” or in the way that the language of “all the authors of the revolutions in opinions” contains an “echo of the eternal music.”<sup>287</sup> To be sure, Coleridge and Shelley

develop significantly different theories of poetry, but they share an investment in a notion of meter that, because it explicitly distances itself from the merely ornamental appearances of meter, is therefore fundamentally abstract: it can be spoken of in its essence only by reference to the way it functions to blend, harmonize, or interpenetrate words, thoughts, and emotions that have not already been combined with each other. This, as Shelley correctly identifies and Coleridge leaves unexplored, implies that “the distinction between poets and prose writers is a vulgar error.”<sup>288</sup> Divorcing poetry from verse, being open to the possibility of poetical prose or novels, denying that all poems must be completely poetical: each of these moves leads to a notion of poetry that may be unique, but that will not uniquely appear in the “traditional form[s]” of poetry.

While Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley all variously provide accounts of the importance and effects of meter in poetical composition, Mill would focus on poetry’s essential *difference* from *narrative*. Like the other thinkers discussed here, Mill also accepts a notion of poetry that is divorced from its metrical, rhythmical, and lineated appearance. Indeed, while he insists on the essential differences between poetry and narrative, he goes on to apply this distinction to the arts of novel-writing, sculpture, painting, and architecture. Artists in each of these media, according to Mill, can create according a poetic or narrative principle, but not both at once. That’s because, for Mill, *narrative* is a form that is primarily concerned with *incident*, and *poetry* is a form that is primarily concerned with *feeling*.<sup>289</sup> These primary concerns, then, dictate different approaches to representing any subject. Narratives tell stories, or “give a true picture of life,” poetry aims “to paint the human soul truly.” Moreover, “the two kinds of knowledge are different, and come by different ways, come mostly to different

persons.”<sup>290</sup> And, while it is possible to bring both narrative and poetry into direct contact with each other in the same work, “and calling it either a novel or a poem,” the differences between the two will be as clear as “red and white . . . on the same human features, or on the same canvass.”<sup>291</sup>

The method of Mill’s argument is, more explicitly than others, based on the experience of reading poetry. He understands that the only plausible way to clarify for “mankind” the concept of poetry is “to bring before their minds as a distinct *principle* that which, as a vague *feeling*, has really guided them in their actual employment of the term.” This direct appeal to experience is made even clearer when he says that “the distinction between poetry and what is not poetry, whether explained or not, is felt to be fundamental. . . . Where everyone feels a difference, a difference must be.”<sup>292</sup> And as my survey in this chapter of the experiences of reading poetry has indicated—whether these experiences are reported in the variety of responses to reading *Don Juan* or function as a foundation or starting point for more wide ranging theories—the *feeling* that identifies poetry is indeed easier to agree upon than the cause of that feeling. Everything from ethical considerations of propriety and manliness to technical definitions of meter and narrative (and many other categories) has been suggested. Ultimately, each of these has probably played a role (whether significant or minor) in history in the determination of what makes poetry poetic.

But, what is even more interesting to me, is the widespread tendency to focus these distinctions overwhelmingly (though obviously not exclusively) on the prose-poetry or novel-poetry binary. Apparently this too is part of the universal and vague feeling: the feeling that whatever poetry is, it is most important to clarify in relation to prose and the

novel. Indeed, I would argue that this consensus among otherwise very different thinkers, who produced different accounts both of poetry and the novel, is actually more significant than their individual contributions. That's because the broad shape of their dialectic—the way in which, in separate instances, they have connected prose and the novel with poetry—continues to determine the broad shape of our own thinking on this matter. In short, the related histories of 18<sup>th</sup> century theories of the novel and 19<sup>th</sup> century poetics make up a composite history of the formation and codification of the novel-poetry binary.

## **V. Conclusion**

As a way, in closing, of illustrating and explaining the practical effects of the broader history of changes to the perception of genre, I return to the example of *Don Juan*'s reception history. We experience *Don Juan* as being novel-like today, ultimately, because of the unique ways in which we essentialize distinctions among genres in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. And, the way that we essentialize distinctions among genres today is itself part of a continuous history of thinking about and recognizing the novelistic, or the poetic, in writing since at least the eighteenth century. Therefore, the reception history of *Don Juan* is, as much as anything else, a history of the development (and byproducts) of the binaries through which we situate poetry and the novel as being essentially different while at the same time being essentially related. These two moves—poetry is not the novel, but poetry is always thought of in relation to the novel, and vice versa—help to explain why *Don Juan* would have become a novel in our current understanding of that genre category. The force of the novel-poetry binary is such that, if

the object is not a poem, then it is a novel. There are, of course, limiting conditions to this, which is why there are so few works in literary history that have made the jump in generic perception. For example, while a cathedral is not a poem—Mill’s analysis of the poetic and narrative in religious architecture notwithstanding—it is not *therefore* a novel. That’s because the basic, or first, categories that we bring to bear on the comprehension of a cathedral do not require a determination within the novel-poetry binary. *Don Juan* both invites categorization within the novel-poetry binary, and resists it. It is slippery in our perception—the more pressure we apply in our attempt to grasp it, the more it behaves in ways that may appear to be unexpected.

Without claiming to have completely solved the puzzle of *Don Juan*’s reception history, I think that we may identify several features in its reception that would have made it particularly susceptible to shifting its pole within the novel-poetry binary. Here, then, I return to the set of hypotheses that I entertained in Section II when analyzing the emergence of the prose-response to *Don Juan*, in the hope that they may now help to further ground an explanation of the causes of changes in the perception of *Don Juan*’s genre:

(a) One significant part of this explanation must surely rely on the fact—continuously noticed by readers of *Don Juan* since its initial publication—that Byron’s style as a poet, his approach to storytelling, characterization, and the representation of characters in society, changes as he continues to write *Don Juan*. Most notably, this helps to explain the view, expressed by many readers, that the English cantos are more novelistic than the rest of the poem. It may also help to explain other patterns within the

history of *Don Juan*'s reception—say, for example, the sense that later cantos (but not earlier cantos) are more like prose than poetry.

(b) Another, potentially more intriguing, part of the explanation for *Don Juan*'s reception history would speak to the ways in which available discourses about the poem were gradually accepted by readers who were otherwise confused by it, even though the available discourses did not exactly explain the particularity of their confusion. On this interpretation, both the prose-response to *Don Juan* and eventually the novel-response begins to catch on not because they explain the experience of reading *Don Juan* in a particularly intuitive way, but because they are the best available options. Readers dislike confusion, and would rather accept a flawed explanation than to embrace the negative capability of uncertainty. (An alternate, and no less plausible, version of this same hypothesis would be that the available discourses *did* accord with readerly experience, thus establishing a rather neat history of the perception of *Don Juan*'s genre.)

(c) The final, and in my view most intriguing, explanation, would be that readers never have, and potentially never will, be able to categorize the experience of reading *Don Juan* according to available genre designations. It is sufficiently like a poem to be criticized for being an *unpoetical* poem; sufficiently unlike a poem to be denied status as a poem; sufficiently similar to prose to have called forth that response; and, finally, sufficiently similar to a novel to have been claimed as one by some of the most important theorists of the novel in the twentieth century. Who knows what the next generation will make of *Don Juan*? Thus, it is not a question of what *Don Juan* is, so much as it is a question of what *Don Juan* is most like (or unlike) in the common experiential landscape against which, at any given time, literature is conventionally received.



These last explanations can be thought of as mapping the possible courses of one stream or current in the broader changes in poetic and novelistic practice over the last three hundred years—changes that, independently of the interest of *Don Juan*'s reception history, have been important for many developments in the historical perception of genre. This history has been subject to many whims not just of writerly practice but also in trends in readership and in critical thought. Despite this extreme historical contingency—what if, for example, Fielding *hadn't* called *Joseph Andrews* a “comic-epic Poem in prose”?—the novel-poetry binary has, through constant use over time, become a permanent part of our experiential landscape.

## CONCLUSION

My approach in this dissertation has been to conceive of a large problem—the history of generic interrelation in Romanticism—and to break it into the individual sub-problems that I explore in each chapter. When I began several years ago to write, the total picture was of much greater interest to me than the individual components that each contribute to that picture. Thus, the poetry of Walter Scott, the formal complexity of impersonality and free indirect discourse, or the history of perceiving and categorizing *Don Juan*'s generic identity were each initially conceived merely as means to what I intended to be a much more significant end. In fact, I only turned to these novels and poems—and some others that did not prove to be relevant for my project—on the expectation or hope that they could help to establish just what generic interrelation looked like in the nineteenth century. The big questions of literary historical methodology and the deep justifications of formalist analysis were what really got me going—everything else was just details.

While questions of methodology for determining the important but hidden movements of literary history continue to be of primary interest to me, I have been pleasantly surprised to discover that the finer details of this project cannot be dismissed as *mere* details. Indeed, in the process of re-reading the dissertation as a whole, I have often been struck by how the total picture seems, if not to slip away, then at least to fade in importance as the local issues shine on their own. Walter Scott's formal innovations in his poetry cannot be understood without examining the fascinating history of the eighteenth-century ballad revival and its effects on antiquarian thought; Jane Austen's

inestimable contributions to the development of the novel become so much more compelling when we consider the circumstances of her personal and professional biography. What has emerged, therefore, is five chapters that each operate simultaneously as individual contributions *and* as interlocking tiles in a larger puzzle. Given the multiple functions of each chapter in the total project, it may be useful to offer in one place a statement of the significant conclusions—both small and large—that I believe can be drawn from the dissertation as a whole. I shall begin by taking a distant view of the project, and gradually zoom in to focus on how the individual details actually enclose entire projects of their own.

Arrived at last, but in development throughout the entire dissertation, is the idea that:

1. *The novel and poetry are bound into a binary system. This binary functions at the level of perceptions, concepts, and form.*

Early readers and authors alike frequently drew on the resources of poetic vocabulary to describe the experience of reading, or the goals of writing, what was at the same time felt to be a new genre of the novel. To be sure, the concepts of poetry invoked were often vague, or focused on different aspects of “poetry.” Nor was poetry the only category invoked to help describe the new form of the novel—conceptions of theater and history, among others, also occasionally feature in these discussions. Unsurprisingly, the novelty of the novel was comprehended in part by categories that were already familiar and known. But, “poetry” appears much more regularly than the other more familiar terms and—crucially—these other terms fall away from discussions of the novel in a way that the category of poetry does not. By the Romantic era, discussions of what was essentially

poetic are almost universally constructed with an understanding that the poetic will often appear in novelistic environments. And, by the twentieth century, discussions of the essentially novelistic are frequently constructed with an understanding that certain key Romantic-era narrative poems are more novelistic than they are poetic. In between these two temporal poles—say between 1800 and 1900—many works that appear to be primarily novelistic or prosaic are claimed as poems, and vice versa; *Don Juan* is denied status as poetry until it is claimed as prosaic and, eventually, novelistic. Thus, the novel-poetry binary can be said to *emerge* in history. Its presence is detectable in early discussions of the novel itself, but its codification in our conceptual schema depends on constant usage over several hundred years.

I have my own suspicions that the emergence of the novel-poetry binary in history is a function of more than just the historical contingency of constant use—that it is connected in some way to the way our minds work, the way our imaginations condition the writing and reading of poetry and the novel—but I am not as yet willing to make the strong conceptual argument about the necessity of generic interrelation. There is, however, another way in which the novel-poetry binary is a necessary conjunction, and this brings me to my second conclusion:

*2. Romantic-era narrative poetry and the novel participate in a shared history of narrative form. The basic condition for this sharing has to do with the formal machinery inherent to both kinds of writing, and is therefore not primarily the result of historical contingency.*

This is not to divorce an analysis of Romantic-era formal engagements from the history in which they are embedded. The unique circumstances and effects of the eighteenth-

century ballad revival, expansions of and developments in the publishing industry of the nineteenth century, and the interests of both writers and readers during this time that gave them as much of an appetite for popular poetry as they did for popular novels—each of these is an important historical condition for the interface between poetry and the novel in Romanticism. But the basic formal fact that narrative poetry and the novel were operating in a compatible formal environment is worth emphasizing on its own. This is to insist that form can partake in the essential movements of literary history, and that it may even be uniquely suited for helping us to see aspects of literary history that are otherwise obscured from view. While genre concepts encourage us to make distinctions, to perceive abstract separation between separate or separable genres, a focus on form enables a new way of looking at generic relationships as they develop in history.

But I also hope for the dissertation to have done more than justify the study of narrative poetry in its generically-interrelated context. Indeed, I want to claim that:

*3. Close attention to narrative poetry can help to enrich our understanding of some of the key artistic and intellectual concerns of the nineteenth century.*

In chapters One and Five, I analyzed the effects of the long history of thinking about poetry primarily in terms of its emotional and intensifying—that is to say, lyrical—attributes. Lyric theory and practice has enjoyed nearly two centuries of dominance in our understanding of what is essentially poetic. While I certainly don't wish to discount the importance of lyric in literary history, I do emphasize that an *exclusive* focus on lyric can obscure as much as it illuminates. Thus, as I argue in Chapters Two and Three, questions of mediation and re-mediation, of Modern Britain's connection to its ancient, oral past,

and indeed of the figure of a narrator who only appears in print, are all treated in substantial and innovative ways in Romantic-era narrative poetry. I have focused primarily on the poetry of Walter Scott—though my arguments have also taken account of Coleridge, Byron, and Wordsworth—but a vast archive of forgotten and barely-read narrative poetry awaits serious investigation. Throughout the entire nineteenth century narrative poetry was one of the most distinguished and popular forms of literary writing. It is my strong suspicion, therefore, that narrative poetry of the nineteenth century may contain one of the brighter futures for studies of Romanticism and poetics.

One particular dimension of this possible future deserves special recognition here, as it indicates what the future of *this* dissertation project will look like: a study of the emergence and practices of the verse-novel. While *Don Juan* might be seen as an originating example of the verse-novel, there are a number of other significant works that fall into this category without first undergoing a vexed history of changes to generic perception. These works include: Alexander Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*, and Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book*—not to mention important liminal examples such as Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* or George Meredith's *Modern Love*. There is at present little published research available on the verse-novel as a genre category. Why did authors identify their works as verse-novels, when did they begin to use that terminology, and how did nineteenth-century audiences react to works that loudly announced themselves as instances of generic mixing? Did these works introduce any new formal techniques into the art of narrative, and, if so, have these innovations influenced other developments in the writing of poetry or the novel? More broadly, how did this new genre category affect the experience of reading? Once

readers begin to have a set of expectations about what it feels like to read a novel-in-verse, or become familiar with the cognitive procedures by which this new genre category is distinguished from either verse or the novel, how does that new mind state cause (or allow) them to re-encode prior memories and experiences of reading according to recently gained conceptual categories? Is the historical variability of the perception of genre a function of the emergence of new genre categories, or do new genre categories emerge to help explain historically-variable experiences in reading?

Since the novel-in-verse continues to be written today, if only occasionally, it is here that we may glimpse what a study of generic interrelation that is completely unmoored from Romantic-era concerns looks like. I have embraced the period-specific concerns of a study of Romantic-era literary production, and I hope that this dissertation will be seen as a genuine contribution to our understanding of reading and writing during this time. At the same time, the theoretical concerns with genre, form, experience, and concepts all point towards a broader subject of study, a unique line of inquiry that combines the methods of the literary historian with the methods of the formalist. The novel-in-verse may indeed be the end of the line, but I suspect that it is just the tip of the iceberg.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins, "General Introduction," in *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2104), 5.

<sup>3</sup> See Jackson and Prins, "Lyrical Studies," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27.2 (1999): 521-30, as well as the whole anthology referenced in the previous note.

<sup>4</sup> Gerard Genette, "The Architext" (1979), trans. Jane E. Lewin (1992), in *The Lyric Theory Reader*, 18.

<sup>5</sup> Genette, "The Architext," 24, 26.

<sup>6</sup> Jackson and Prins, "General Introduction," in *The Lyric Theory Reader*, 1.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, G. Gabrielle Starr, *Lyric Generations: Poetry and the Novel in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2004). Starr argues persuasively that the rise of the novel was strongly influenced by the conventions of lyric poetry that predate its emergence, and that the changes to the genre of lyric poetry in Romanticism were strongly influenced by the novel. But rather than acknowledging a whole range of historical and formal conditions that caused the two genres to exert influence on each other, Starr assumes that the two genres developed, first, in response to the fear of subjective isolation stoked by the writings of the British empiricists, and, second, in response to each other in their relative successes and failures in developing as genres that were capable of representing a sympathetic corrective to that fear of subjective isolation. This set of assumptions causes two significant problems for Starr's overall argument. First, it has the effect of reading both the novel and lyric poetry as if they were primarily concerned to endorse and create generic accommodations for a sympathetic, anti-empiricist worldview—that they existed as just one position in a philosophical master discourse. Second, Starr's exclusive focus on the isolation-sympathy dialogue causes her to limit her attention to cross-generic influences that primarily concern the project of overcoming subjective isolation—a methodological decision that practically demands an unnecessarily restricted focus on lyric.

<sup>8</sup> See Mary Favret, "Telling Tales about Genre: Poetry in the Romantic Novel," *Studies in the Novel* 26 (1994), and Ann Wierda Rowland, "Romantic Poetry and the Romantic Novel," in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008). I discuss the



significance of these essays at greater length in Chapter Five, when I examine the emergence of the novel-poetry binary.

<sup>9</sup> Karl Kroeber, *Romantic Narrative Art* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1960), 168-69.

<sup>10</sup> John Sutherland, in his biography of Walter Scott, shows that Scott not only puffed his own work when writing about it anonymously, but that he also did so by praising the very elements of his poetry that he would later confess to having plagiarized from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Christabel*. See Sutherland, *The Life of Walter Scott* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 146-7.

<sup>11</sup> Nancy Moore Goslee, *Scott the Rhymer* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1988), 1.

<sup>12</sup> Recent, important evaluations of Scott's work where discussion of his poetry is nearly or entirely absent include: James Kerr, *Fiction Against History: Scott as Storyteller* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Ian Duncan, *Modern Romance and the Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, Dickens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and Duncan, *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); and James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998). Jane Millgate, *Walter Scott: The Making of the Novelist* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1984) has two short, but substantial, introductory chapters about Scott's poetry. See also Alexander Welsh, *The Hero of the Waverley Novels* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963); and the essays by C. I. Rothery ("Scott's Narrative Poetry and the Classical Form of the Historical Novel," 63-74) and Ruth Eller ("The Poetic Theme in Scott's Novels," 75-86) which appeared in the proceedings of the 1982 Aberdeen Scott Conference.

<sup>13</sup> The notable exceptions, in addition to Millgate, include Stuart Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986); Maureen N. McLane, *Balladeering, Minstrelsy, and the Making of British Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008); and Celeste Langan, "Understanding Media in 1805: Audiovisual Hallucination in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*," *Studies in Romanticism* 40 (Spring 2001): 49-70.

<sup>14</sup> See *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, et al., 2 vols. (New York: Norton & Company, 2006), 2:407-410; *The Longman Anthology of British Literature: Volume 2A, The*

*Romantics and Their Contemporaries*, ed. Susan Wolfson and Peter Manning (New York: Pearson Education, 2006), 382.

<sup>15</sup> See William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 216. For a detailed discussion of the extent and the effect of literary piracy, see chapter 15, 293-306.

<sup>16</sup> See St. Clair, 642-3. Impressive as these numbers are, they pale in comparison to the astronomical sales numbers of the *Waverley* novels. St. Clair claims that the *Waverley* novels sold more than all the other novels of the Romantic era combined.

<sup>17</sup> St. Clair, 219.

<sup>18</sup> St. Clair, 419.

<sup>19</sup> St. Clair, 246. See Chapters 11 (186-209), and 13 (235-267), for more detailed discussion of the effects of price on access, and on the effects of circulating libraries and reading societies on reading.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1996). Though Bourdieu focuses on the specific features of the literary field in France during the 1840s and 1880s—in particular by emphasizing its political and class oppositions—I think his analysis of the sociology of creativity is most enlightening for the way it derives literary influence from the network of social relationships that connect authors to each other, both consciously and unconsciously.

<sup>21</sup> James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2007), 269. The term “publishing season” appears on page 225. My discussion of the social, cultural, and economic dimensions of the publishing industry during the Romantic period has benefited from chapters 8 and 9 in Raven’s book (221-293).

<sup>22</sup> See St. Clair, 160.

<sup>23</sup> St. Clair, 161. For a more formalized discussion of the “political economy” of this literary-economic relationship, see chapter 22 (433-452).

<sup>24</sup> But see St. Clair, 161-168, for a discussion of the unfair contracts issued to most non-best-selling authors. Poets received worse contracts than novelists. This disparity between the kinds of contracts authors

would receive for composing in different genres may go a long way in explaining the migration of generic elements that originate in poetry into the novel.

<sup>25</sup> Longman, who Thomas Moore called the “establishment publisher,” was the biggest firm, and the one least likely to publish outside the mainstream (quoted in St. Clair, 159). See St. Clair, 158-161 for a general discussion of the relation between business interest and literary production.

<sup>26</sup> The term “mentalities” is used repeatedly throughout *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*.

<sup>27</sup> St. Clair, 401. I don’t know of any way to determine the generic lineage of the Romantic period without performing close readings of its generic structures, and so, I think the aims of my project are sufficiently different from the aims of those projects that St. Clair criticizes to warrant using the critical technique whose overall value he is disposed to dismiss out of hand.

<sup>28</sup> St. Clair, 213. The chapter from which this quote is taken, entitled “Romance” (210-234), gives a detailed history of the spread of the form of “romance” in the Romantic period. One of the key conclusions of this chapter is that there was little sense of a unifying Romanticism at the time, and, in retrospect, we have little reason to assume that the majority of the works produced during the period accord with our current sense of its distinctive features: “Measured by numbers of titles, the majority of the poets of the romantic age wrote short works in the traditional style on traditional topics. Like their old-canon predecessors, they described religious feelings, the hand of God in sublime Nature, youth and age, love and family affections, parting, death, and grief” (215).

<sup>29</sup> As St. Clair says, “for many book societies, the decision to buy *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, or *The Lady of the Lake*, marked their first venture into modern literature. After Scott they bought Byron, although often refusing *Don Juan*. And it is clear from the few borrowing records which survive that, among the books which were bought, the national bestsellers were borrowed more frequently than the others” (254).

<sup>30</sup> Jane Austen to Anna Austen, 28 September 1814, in *Scott: The Critical Heritage*, ed. John O. Hayden (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 74. Extract quoted from R. W. Chapman, ed., *Jane Austen’s Letters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1952).

<sup>31</sup> Michael McKeon, *Origins of the English Novel* (1987; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2002), xx.

<sup>32</sup> Walter Scott, Scott, "Introduction" (1802) to the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, in *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart. Together with the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border with the Author's Introductions and Notes* (New York: World Publishing House, 1875), 38.

<sup>33</sup> Paula McDowell, "Mediating Media Present: Toward a Genealogy of 'Print Culture' and 'Oral Tradition'," in *This is Enlightenment*, ed. Clifford Siskin and William Warner (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2010), 242.

<sup>34</sup> Jonathan Culler, "Lyric, History, and Genre" (2009), in *The Lyric Theory Reader*, ed. Jackson and Prins, 64.

<sup>35</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1982), 26-7.

<sup>36</sup> See Cohen, "History and Genre."

<sup>37</sup> Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981), 9-10; Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, ed. and trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 8.

<sup>38</sup> Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), 513.

<sup>39</sup> The quote is from William Wordsworth, preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800). The text I have consulted is Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 1991), 246.

<sup>40</sup> Kroeber, 180.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Kroeber, 191-2.

<sup>42</sup> Kroeber, 11. Kroeber explores the importance of narrative subject-matter for Romantic literary style throughout chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>43</sup> Kroeber, 173.

<sup>44</sup> Marshall Brown, "Poetry and the Novel," in *The Cambridge Companion to Fiction in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), 117.

<sup>45</sup> Brown, 118, 120.

<sup>46</sup> Brown, 116.

<sup>47</sup> Brown, 116, 122.

<sup>48</sup> Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, 252.

<sup>49</sup> Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, 253, 263-5. See Chapter Five of this dissertation for a more extensive discussion of Romantic-era theories of meter and its role in defining what is essential about poetry.

<sup>50</sup> For one component of this tendency to insist on essential differences, see René Wellek, "Genre Theory, the Lyric, and *Erlebnis*" (1967), in *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, 40-52, who has shown that since the middle of the nineteenth century, the essential features of poetry have been increasingly thought to be the exclusive domain of intensity, subjectivity, feeling, and so on.

<sup>51</sup> Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin, (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1980), 26.

<sup>52</sup> As a counterpart to this claim, see Jonathan Culler, "Why Lyric?," *PMLA* 123.1 (2008): 201-206, where he criticizes the tendency to read lyrics as if they were dramatic monologues. This way of "align[ing] poetry with the novel" ends up "ignor[ing] the characteristic extravagance of lyric," and the ways in which it does not have "a known real-world counterpart" in the way that dramatic monologue does (202).

<sup>53</sup> For the long history of this concept of lyric, see W. R. Johnson, *The Idea of Lyric: Lyric Modes in Ancient and Modern Poetry* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1982); for a contemporary discussion of how this notion of lyric has affected novelistic representation, see G. Gabrielle Starr, *Lyric Generations: Poetry and the Novel in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2004).

<sup>54</sup> Walter Scott, *Waverley* (1814), ed. Andrew Hook (London: Penguin, 1972), 60. Hereafter abbreviated *W* and cited parenthetically by page number.

<sup>55</sup> See Favret, for a compelling discussion of inserted lyrics in the Romantic novel.

<sup>56</sup> Ralph Cohen, "History and Genre," *New Literary History* 17, no. 2 (1986): 217.

<sup>57</sup> Cohen, "History and Genre," 203-4.

<sup>58</sup> Cohen, "History and Genre," 204. The specific phrase, "process theory of genre," occurs on page 217.

<sup>59</sup> Cohen, "History and Genre," 210. But see also Jonathan Culler, "Lyric, History, and Genre" (2009), in *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, 63-77. Culler argues that it is "dubious" to separate genres into empirical and theoretical categories. Rather, he urges "that genres are always historical yet based on some sort of rationale" (64). I agree with Culler that "a great many supposedly empirical generic categories

do play a constitutive role in reading and writing” (64)—a notion that informs this entire dissertation—but I think this way of talking about genre still counts as “historical” or “empirical.” Thus, just as genres are historical, so too are the logics or notions that readers and writers employ in their understanding of them.

<sup>60</sup> Cohen, “History and Genre,” 207. But see also the essays of comparatist Claudio Guillén, in *Literature as System: Essays Toward the Theory of Literary History* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), especially “The Aesthetics of Literary Influence,” 17-52, and “On the Object of Literary Change,” 470-510. Guillén’s methodology specifically dismisses restrictive definitions for a study of the system of genres as it manifests on a world scale: “The historical heritage of the comparatist . . . is precisely the synthetic-systematic view, and the main challenge with which he is confronted is to make synthesis possible, or to draw out systems, on a genuinely literary level” (42). Guillén’s elaboration of the comparatist’s view of a system is well taken, and it underwrites much of the comparative genre work that I pursue in this dissertation.

<sup>61</sup> My interest in this chapter is primarily in the *formal* relationship between poetry and the novel. See Chapter Five for a deeper look at their *conceptual* relation. Obviously the conceptual and formal are not entirely distinct—for example, our understanding of the formal relation between poetry and the novel is determined in part by our concepts of what that formal relation can consist of. Nonetheless, the history of conceptualizing the novel, and the related history of conceptualizing poetry in the wake of the novel’s rise, has its own unique contours, and therefore requires a different kind of investigation.

<sup>62</sup> McKeon, *Origins of the English Novel*, xvii.

<sup>63</sup> McKeon, *Origins of the English Novel*, xx.

<sup>64</sup> McKeon, *Origins of the English Novel*, 20.

<sup>65</sup> McKeon, *Origins of the English Novel*, 19.

<sup>66</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” in *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism 1900-2000*, ed. Dorothy Hale (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 486.

<sup>67</sup> Bakhtin, 484.

<sup>68</sup> This is a tendency that Dominick LaCapra pointed to in his reply to Ralph Cohen’s 1986 argument on behalf of a “process theory of genre.” LaCapra writes that fully establishing “the relation of genres to each other” requires answering “the further question of hegemonic relations within given areas or disciplines and

within society and culture at large.” These hegemonic relations, for the purposes of genre theory, are indicated by the fact that “genres generally come in hierarchies, and the objection to a mixture of genres often occults or conceals an attempt to retain or reinforce a dominant position or an authoritative perspective.” Domnick LaCapra, “Comment,” *New Literary History* 17, no. 2 (1986): 221.

<sup>69</sup> Cohen, “Genre Theory, Literary History, and Historical Change,” in *Theoretical Issues in Literary History*, ed. David Perkins (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1991), 110.

<sup>70</sup> Practically speaking, the uneven development of genre theory and practice is not unique to the Romantic period—indeed, it would seem to be a necessary condition of the process of genre history in general. For a particularly striking example of it in the early modern period, see “The Empirical Style Becomes Problematic” in McKeon, *Origins*, 105ff. In fitting the content of imaginative literature into the form of the empirical style—a set of rhetorical principles derived by the Royal Society for scientific writing—early-modern writers adapted principles of genre to previously unimagined ends. The influence of these empirically-styled imaginative writings spread in ways that could not have been predicted by only studying the theory of genre that originally enabled their development.

<sup>71</sup> See St. Clair, chapters 6 and 7, for an account of the legal underpinnings of the “explosion of reading” of this “old canon” material. See also chapter 17, especially pages 344-346, for an account of the conditions of ownership and commercial imperatives that explain some importantly profit-minded aspects of the romance revival.

<sup>72</sup> Curran, 18.

<sup>73</sup> See Curran, 27.

<sup>74</sup> Curran, 145. See also Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997), esp. chapter 2, “The End of an Auld Sang: Oral Tradition and Literary History” for an account of how Gothic novelists used the frame structure as a way of casting skepticism on the supposedly antique manuscript materials that the frame presents and encloses.

<sup>75</sup> Susan Manning, “Antiquarianism, Balladry, and the Rehabilitation of Romance,” in *The Cambridge History of English Romantic Literature*, ed. James Chandler (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), 52.

<sup>76</sup> See also Susan Manning, "Henry Mackenzie's *Report on Ossian*: Cultural Authority in Transition," *Modern Language Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (December 2007): 517-39, for an analysis of another important example of a cultural problem that was affected by the competing imperatives of oral culture and chirographic/typographic culture. I'll discuss critiques of this "confrontational mode" of orality and literacy in the next chapter.

<sup>77</sup> The ballad revival, of course, was in part based on manuscript records as well. Indeed, Percy originally discovered the materials of what would eventually become his *Reliques* in manuscript form. But see Susan Stewart, "Scandals of the Ballad," *Representations* 32 (Fall 1990): 134-56, esp. 146, and Maureen N. McLane, *Balladeering, Minstrelsy, and the Making of British Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), esp. chapter 1, "Dating Orality, Thinking Balladry: Of Minstrels and Milkmaids in 1771," for detailed accounts of the strong preference for oral over and against manuscript sources.

<sup>78</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (1982; London: Routledge, 2002), 12.

<sup>79</sup> See also John Guillory's excellent essay, "Genesis of the Media Concept," *Critical Inquiry* 36 (Winter, 2010): 321-362, which recounts a long history of the emergence of the concepts of media awareness.

<sup>80</sup> Celeste Langan and Maureen N. McLane, "The Medium of Romantic Poetry," in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romantic Poetry*, ed. James Chandler (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), 242, 248.

<sup>81</sup> Langan and McLane, 250.

<sup>82</sup> Langan and McLane, 251.

<sup>83</sup> For two of the most influential examples of this kind of narrative theory are Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, second ed. (1961; Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983); and Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978).

<sup>84</sup> The challenges to a theory of generic interrelation are not, after all, so different from those facing media theory. They both seek not only to identify the like elements that transfer between unlike (generic or media) environments, but also to explain what allows that transfer to take place, and what, if anything, is lost or added in the process of this transmission.



<sup>85</sup> Rader, "The Concept of Genre and Eighteenth-Century Studies," in *New Approaches to Eighteenth-Century Literature*, ed. Phillip Harth (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1974), 114-115. See also Frances Ferguson, "Ralph Rader on the Literary History of the Novel," *Narrative* 18, no. 1 (January, 2010): 91-103. Ferguson's essay is part of a recent movement to reintroduce Rader's thought into contemporary criticism. Many of Rader's essays, which I consulted in their original sources of publication, have recently been released in a volume entitled *Fact, Fiction, and Form: Selected Essays*, ed. James Phelan and David H. Richter (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 2011). [A note to readers: apologies for the possible page-number mistakes in the notes that follow—I'm only partially through the process of transitioning to this new edition of Rader's essays.]

<sup>86</sup> These terms appear, respectively, in Rader, "The Dramatic Monologue and Related Lyric Forms," *Critical Inquiry* 3, no. 1 (Autumn, 1976): 131-151, 132; Rader, "The Concept of Genre and Eighteenth-Century Studies," 87; and Rader, "Literary Constructs: Experience and Explanation," *Poetics* 18 (1989): 337-353, 343; among other places (most of Rader's essays are marked by nearly-identical repetitions from his other essays).

<sup>87</sup> Rader, "The Emergence of the Novel in England: Genre in History vs. History of Genre," in *Fact, Fiction, and Form*, 210.

<sup>88</sup> Rader, "The Concept of Genre," 73.

<sup>89</sup> Rader, "Fact, Theory, Literary Explanation," in *Fact, Fiction, and Form*, 249.

<sup>90</sup> Rader, "The Concept of Genre," 65-66.

<sup>91</sup> Rader, "Notes on Some Structural Varieties and Variations in Dramatic 'I' Poems and Their Theoretical Implications," in *Fact, Fiction, and Form*, 160.

<sup>92</sup> As will become clear in chapter 3, I do not intend for this account of innovation and inheritance to imply that the act of redeployment can not itself involve a significant rewriting of or reaction against its predecessor. This is an argument about the conditions of possibility for one kind of history of generic change, which is distinguishable from a kind of paternalist argument about the perpetual and pervasive influence of origins.

<sup>93</sup> This is a significant shortcoming of Rader's published work, but I don't believe it to be essential to his method of analysis (it is certainly a shortcoming I aim to avoid in my deployment of Rader's methodology).

Since I'm only borrowing what I find to be useful from Rader, and am not here primarily interested in representing the totality of his strengths and weaknesses, I will not explore this critique further at present. But see the spirited debate between Rader ("Novel and History") and McKeon ("Reply") about this very topic in *Narrative* 1.1 and 1.2.

<sup>94</sup> On this point, in addition to McKeon, see also Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*.

<sup>95</sup> Thomas Percy, "An Essay on the Ancient Minstrels," *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and other Pieces of our earlier Poets, (chiefly of the Lyric kind.) Together with some few of later Date* (London: Printed for J. Dodsley in Pall-Mall, 1765), xv, xxii (emphasis added).

<sup>96</sup> Walter Scott, "Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad," in *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart. Together with the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border with the Author's Introductions and Notes* (New York: World Publishing House, 1875), 179.

<sup>97</sup> It should not go without saying, however, that Scott was no admirer of the oral tradition's capacity for preservation. His interest, here, is in ancient poetry originally composed and performed by way of human voice, without the aid of writing of any sort—but he thinks that the oral tradition itself is particularly ill-suited for preserving these original, ancient works. He makes this point most emphatically in his 1802 introduction to *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, and his 1830 essay, "Introductory Remarks on Popular Poetry," which was included in later editions of the *Minstrelsy*. For more sanguine accounts of the capacity and efficiency of pre-literate memory, see James Macpherson, "A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity, &c. of the Poems of Ossian the Son of Fingal" (1765), and John Pinkerton, "On the Oral Tradition of Poetry" (1781).

<sup>98</sup> Paula McDowell, "Mediating Media Present: Toward a Genealogy of 'Print Culture' and 'Oral Tradition'," in *This is Enlightenment*, ed. Clifford Siskin and William Warner (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2010), 242.

<sup>99</sup> Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England: 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 5.

<sup>100</sup> Fox, 50.

<sup>101</sup> Susan Stewart, "Scandals of the Ballad," *Representations* 32 (Fall 1990): 138.

<sup>102</sup> Nicholas Hudson, “‘Oral Tradition’: The Evolution of an Eighteenth-Century Concept,” in *Tradition in Transition: Women Writers, Marginal Texts, and the Eighteenth-Century Canon*, ed. Alvaro Ribeiro and James G. Basker (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), 162.

<sup>103</sup> Fox, 6, emphasis added.

<sup>104</sup> For a wealth of information on the unprecedented sales and influence of Scott’s poetry, see William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), esp. chapter 12 (“Romance,” 210-234), and Appendix 9, esp., 633ff.

<sup>105</sup> While my argument here is focused exclusively on the poetry of Walter Scott, see Celeste Langan and Maureen N. McLance, “The Medium of Romantic Poetry,” in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romantic Poetry*, ed. James Chandler and Maureen N. McLane (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), 239-262, for a broader look at the ways in which Romantic-era poetry itself functioned as a tool for analyzing media history.

<sup>106</sup> Walter Scott, 1805 Preface to *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, in *The Poetical Works of Walter Scott, Baronet*, ed. William J. Rolfe (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1887; repr., Holicong, PA: Wildside Press, 2003), 565. Hereafter abbreviated *L*, and cited parenthetically by canto and stanza number.

<sup>107</sup> For a detailed account of Scott’s plagiarism of Coleridge, and the ensuing drama between the two men, see John Sutherland *The Life of Walter Scott* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), esp. 101-103, and 147-150.

<sup>108</sup> On Scott’s role as a popularizer of frame narratives, see Stuart Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986).

<sup>109</sup> The quotes are from Maureen McLane, *Balladeering, Minstrelsy, and the Making of British Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), 50 and 60, respectively. But see also 30-33 (for a discussion of the poet James Beattie), and all of chapter 2 (45-83).

<sup>110</sup> McLane, *Balladeering*, 60.

<sup>111</sup> Erik Simpson, *Literary Minstrelsy, 1770-1830: Minstrels and Improvisers in British, Irish, and American Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 15.

<sup>112</sup> Millgate, 18.

<sup>113</sup> Curran, 145.

<sup>114</sup> Scott, "Introduction" (1802) to the *Minstrelsy*, in *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, 38, emphasis added.

<sup>115</sup> James Macpherson, "A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity, &c. of the Poems of Ossian the Son of Fingal" (1765), introduction to *The Works of Ossian, The Son of Fingal. In Two Volumes*, trans. James Macpherson, in *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*, ed. Howard Gaskill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1996), 51, emphasis added.

<sup>116</sup> William Warner, *Protocols of Liberty: Communication Innovation and The American Revolution* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 2013), 25-6. (I thank Professor Warner for allowing me to read and quote from his book when it was in manuscript form.) It may be useful to compare my argument here with Langan, "Understanding Media in 1805: Audiovisual Hallucination in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*," *Studies in Romanticism* 40 (Spring 2001): 49-70. Like Langan, I am interested in Scott's sensitivity to the effects of print on oral poetry. But rather than the poem's "audiovisual hallucinations," which Langan argues cause the reader to feel the limitations of print, I focus on how Scott represents two kinds of historicized narrative voice changing into each other.

<sup>117</sup> See Alex Woloch, *The One vs. The Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003).

<sup>118</sup> Alex Woloch, *The One vs. The Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2003), 13.

<sup>119</sup> Jerome J. McGann, in "The Meaning of the Ancient Mariner," *Critical Inquiry* 8.1 (Autumn, 1981): 35-67 discusses the long history of the more critical view of the role of the prose glosses, and produces his own argument for reading them as more historically complex. As far as I can tell, Huntington Brown, "The Gloss to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*," *MLQ* 6 (1945): 310-324 is the first to notice that the glosses are not necessarily meant to be associated with Coleridge's own point of view (or indeed with his own historical period). For a more recent discussion of the glosses in the *Rime*, see Mark Barr, "The Forms of Justice: Precedent and Gloss in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*," *ELH* 78 (2011): 863-889.

<sup>120</sup> See, respectively, Robert F. Gleckner, *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise* (The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1967); Karl Kroeber, *Romantic Narrative Art* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1966); and McGann, *Fiery Dust: Byron's Poetic Development* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968).

<sup>121</sup> Lord Byron, notes to *The Giaour*, in *Lord Byron: The Major Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), 246.

<sup>122</sup> For an overview of this kind of argument, see Barbara Ravelhofer, "Oral Poetry and the Printing Press in Byron's *The Giaour* (1813)," *Romanticism* 11.1 (2005): 23-40.

<sup>123</sup> I thank the anonymous reviewer at *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* who helped me to see that the category of narrator-space may be broadly applicable in Romantic-era poetry, particularly poetry that is interested in the relation between oral and print narrative.

<sup>124</sup> See Sutherland, 102-105, for an informative account of the Scott family structure of the *Lay*.

<sup>125</sup> This interesting formal situation, in which the position projected by a narrator is experienced as being oriented in a defined physical space in which it cannot be physically embodied, will return below, in my discussion of *Marmion* (1806).

<sup>126</sup> Peter J. Rabinowitz, *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation* (Columbus: The Ohio State Univ. Press, 1987), 95, 96. For more recent commentary on Rabinowitz's categories, see Harry Shaw, "Making Readers," *Narrative* 15.2 (May 2007): 207-221.

<sup>127</sup> Hugh Blair, *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal* (1763), in *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*, 378.

<sup>128</sup> Scott, "Introductory Remarks on Popular Poetry, and on the Various Collections of Ballads of Britain, Particularly Those of Scotland" (1830), in *The Poetical Works of Walter Scott*, 5, emphasis added.

<sup>129</sup> Maurice Blanchot, "The Narrative Voice: (the 'he', the neuter)," in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader: Fiction & Literary Essays*, ed. George Quasha, trans. Lydia Davis, Paul Aster and Robert Lamberton (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1999), 467.

<sup>130</sup> Review of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, by Walter Scott, *Literary Journal* (March 1805), in *Scott: The Critical Heritage*, ed. John O. Hayden (London: Routledge, 1970), 28.

<sup>131</sup> Review of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel: A Poem*, by Walter Scott, *The Edinburgh Review* 6.11 (April 1805): 7.

<sup>132</sup> Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978), 25.

<sup>133</sup> I have checked this interesting typographical feature against several other editions of the *Lay*. As far as I can tell, Scott deliberately intended to set off the frame narrative from the minstrel's narrative in the same stanza with a long, black line.

<sup>134</sup> Blair, in *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*, 352-3, emphasis added

<sup>135</sup> Millgate, 20.

<sup>136</sup> In his biography of Walter Scott, Sutherland shows that not only did Scott puff his own work when writing about it anonymously, but also that he did so by praising the very elements of his poetry that he would later confess to having plagiarized from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Christabel*. See Sutherland, 146-7.

<sup>137</sup> Scott to Miss Seward, Edinburgh, 21 March 1805, in Sir Herbert Grierson, ed., *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, 12 vol. (London: Constable, 1932-37), 1:242. Accessed as an e-text via the Edinburgh University Library's "Walter Scott Digital Archive," <http://www.walterscott.lib.ed.ac.uk/etexts/etexts/letters.html>. Hereafter abbreviated *Lett.* and cited by volume and page number.

<sup>138</sup> Scott to the Right Honorable Lady Charlotte Rawdon, Ashestiel Selkirk, 19 April 1805, *Lett.*, 1:271.

<sup>139</sup> Scott to Miss Seward, Ashestiel, 10 April 1806, *Lett.*, 1:286-7.

<sup>140</sup> It may not be irrelevant to note that in many theories of ancient poetry, of which Scott was surely aware, one distinctive mark of the poetry's antiquity was thought to be the extent to which it was rendered unevenly, or "wildly." Thus, Hugh Blair writes that Macpherson's translation of Ossian's poems "bears all the marks of the greatest antiquity. No artful transitions; nor full and extended connection of parts; such as we find among poets of later times..." (Blair, *A Critical Dissertation*, 354). Thus it is not implausible to suppose that Scott's "criticism" of his own poem could be reconfigured as something more descriptive of the kind of poetry that he was, in part, attempting to imitate.

<sup>141</sup> Scott, *Marmion*, in *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, canto 2 stanza 17. Hereafter abbreviated *M* and cited parenthetically by canto and stanza number.

<sup>142</sup> Goslee, 41-43, and 64-65, offers, in my view, an unpersuasive—if somewhat typical—account of the role of *Marmion*'s forgery in determining Scott's attitudes about his own act of poetic creation. She writes that "Marmion's forgery enacts Scott's own ambivalence toward the free inventions of his imagination in romantic narrative and toward their successful publication; it is thus a literary as well as a literal act" (43).

But, the problem with Marmion's treachery is not that it is "imaginative," but that it is a lie that results in the wrongful accusation of another person. It is clear that Scott makes an easy distinction between imaginative acts and lying, since the imaginative work of minstrels continues, throughout his career, to be treated as a positive, if lost, form of cultural expression. In other words, fiction and forgery are easily separated in *Marmion*.

<sup>143</sup> Wordsworth, "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey . . .," in *Lyrical Ballads*, page 115, lines 56-7.

<sup>144</sup> Wordsworth, "The Solitary Reaper," in *William Wordsworth: The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2000), page 319, lines 1-8.

<sup>145</sup> Wordsworth wrote "The Solitary Reaper" in 1805, before Scott had begun work on *Marmion*, but did not publish it until 1807, after *Marmion* had already been written and published.

<sup>146</sup> Wordsworth, "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*, 250, 255.

<sup>147</sup> The movement between seeing more penetratively than Marmion, and seeing just as penetratively as Marmion, maps onto the formal difference, in Cohn's terminology, between "psycho-narration" and "quoted monologue." Psycho-narration is "the narrator's discourse about a character's consciousness," whereas quoted monologue is the direct representation of "a character's mental discourse" (14). Using these different techniques for representing a character's mental life allows a narrator to look variously at a character's conscious and unconscious states of mind (with psycho-narration providing the clearest view of the unconscious mind, and quoted monologue providing the clearest view of the conscious mind), and each narrative technique implies different levels of narrative access and power. See Cohn, 139, for a diagram mapping out the relation between conscious and unconscious thoughts, on the one hand, and narrative techniques, on the other.

<sup>148</sup> Scott, *The Poetical Works of Walter Scott*, 592n25.

<sup>149</sup> See Goslee, 61, who identifies De Wilton's skepticism.

<sup>150</sup> Sutherland, 125.

<sup>151</sup> [Francis Jeffrey], review of *Marmion*, by Walter Scott, *Edinburgh Review* (April 1808), 1-35, quoted in *Scott: The Critical Heritage*, 37.

<sup>152</sup> See John Pikoulis, "Scott and 'Marmion': The Discoveries of Identity," *Modern Language Review* 66, no. 4 (1971): 738-50; J. D. McClatchy, "The Ravages of Time: The Function of the *Marmion* Epistles," *Studies in Scottish Literature* 9 (1972): 256-63; Millgate, 23-25; and Goslee 43-46.

<sup>153</sup> Curran, 138. See also Curran, 139-40, for his argument about how this basic structural relationship serves as a principle for composition in many of the scenes in the tale itself.

<sup>154</sup> Curran, 140.

<sup>155</sup> Millgate, 25.

<sup>156</sup> For a history of the early reviews of *Marmion* that attempted to resist or ignore the verse epistles, see McClatchy, esp. 256-257. These efforts were aided by misinformation provided by J. G. Lockhart, Scott's son-in-law and first biographer, who suggested that the verse epistles were not originally written to be included in *Marmion*.

<sup>157</sup> Scott, "Introduction" to *The Lady of the Lake*, in *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, 595-596, emphasis added.

<sup>158</sup> Scott, "Introduction" to *Rokeby*, in *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, 606.

<sup>159</sup> St. Clair, 170. Ballantyne, like many other publishing firms, went under after a significant but ultimately non-systematic collapse of the publishing industry in 1826 (see St. Clair, 171).

<sup>160</sup> Sutherland, 139. See, more generally, all of chapter 7, "The Complete Author (1809-1811)," 132-153, for a detailed account of the ways in which Scott secretly exerted control over the entire publishing industry.

<sup>161</sup> Scott, *The Lady of the Lake*, in *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, introduction to canto 1. Hereafter abbreviated *LL* and cited parenthetically by canto and stanza number.

<sup>162</sup> Goslee, 86.

<sup>163</sup> Goslee, 88.

<sup>164</sup> Goslee, 88.

<sup>165</sup> Goslee, 85-6.

<sup>166</sup> See Millgate, chapter 1 ("Editorial Strategies: The *Minstrelsy* and the *Lay*," 3-18) and chapter 2 ("Variations on a Method: *Marmion* to *Rokeby*, 19-34).

<sup>167</sup> Millgate, 21.



<sup>168</sup> Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews and Shamela*, ed. Douglas Brooks-Davies (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999), 36.

<sup>169</sup> Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*, 147.

<sup>170</sup> Fielding, *Tom Jones*, ed. John Bender and Simon Stern (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), 88.

Hereafter abbreviated as *TJ* and cited parenthetically by page number. This unique formulation of *whether x or y, I cannot determine* occurs over a dozen times throughout the text of *Tom Jones*.

<sup>171</sup> R. S. Crane, "The Concept of Plot and the Plot of *Tom Jones*," in *Critics and Criticism*, ed. R. S. Crane (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1952), 639, 642.

<sup>172</sup> Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Second Edition (1961; Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983), 216-17.

<sup>173</sup> This experience, the contours of which I'll examine over the course of this chapter, can be seen as intimately linked to the categories of ethical experience that the "new ethical theories of the novel" (as termed by Dorothy Hale) have taken as their primary object of analysis. ("Fiction as Restriction: Self-Binding in New Ethical Theories of the Novel," *Narrative* 15.2 [May 2007]: 187-206). According to Hale—who notes the "surprising relevance" of Wayne Booth's concept of the "implied author" (188) for this recent body of work—the new ethical theories of the novel argue that

By assenting to construct oneself in the image of the reader that is solicited through the text, the reader has made an ethical decision: she has opened herself up to alterity that is not only itself an ethical action but that creates the possibility for ethics. (199)

Thus, the kinds of demands that the narrator makes upon the reader's experience of the story he or she is conveying can be construed not only as having formal and literary-historical significance, but ethical significance as well.

In addition to Hale's article, see Judith Butler, "Values of Difficulty," *Just Being Difficult?: Academic Writing in the Public Arena*, ed. Jonathan Culler and Kevin Lamb (Palo Alto: Stanford Univ. Press, 2003), 199-215; and Lynn Huffer, "'There is no Gomorrah': Narrative Ethics in Feminist and Queer Theory," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 12.3 (2001): 1-32, for representative samples of the new narrative ethics. See also Rabinowitz (esp. 94-5) for a series of minute and useful distinctions among a novel's "actual audience," "authorial audience," and "narrative audience," all of which help to

identify the precise way in which a reader's imaginative experience is dependent on an act of subordination, or assent, to an author's intention.

<sup>174</sup> Fielding, *Tom Jones*, ed. John Bender and Simon Stern (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 149.

Hereafter abbreviated *TJ* and cited parenthetically by page number.

<sup>175</sup> Booth, 212.

<sup>176</sup> Millgate, 18.

<sup>177</sup> Ong, 32.

<sup>178</sup> Booth, 216.

<sup>179</sup> See also *Joseph Andrews*, "A very short Chapter, in which Parson *Adams* went a great Way" (*JA*, 112).

<sup>180</sup> See Goslee, chapter one, esp. 21, who points out that Scott's poetry had been particularly concerned with the way that minstrels respond to their audiences.

<sup>181</sup> See also Booth, in a section of *The Rhetoric of Fiction* entitled "Imitators of Fielding," who traces out the undistinguished legacy of the "hundreds of attempts at similar narrators [where] there are far more failures than successes" (218).

<sup>182</sup> It is commonplace to think of realist narration as, among other things, investigating the strengths and limits of impersonality. D. A. Miller, for example, has written that Jane Austen embeds an analysis of impersonality into her narrator position. Indeed, Miller goes so far as to argue that "nowhere else in nineteenth-century English narration have the claims of the 'person,' its ideology, been more completely denied" than in the construction of Austen's narrator. (*Jane Austen, or, The Secret of Style* [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2003], 31). And, writing about Victorian-era concerns about objectivity and detachment, Amanda Anderson has argued that Charles Dickens uses the formal contrast between character and narrator to "work out concerns of omniscience and detachment." (*The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2001], 78). These concerns include the worry that the kind of detached position required for systemic analysis and critique, not to mention omniscient narration, also necessarily open onto positions of "constant alienation" (81), rootlessness, and, ultimately, of impersonality. (See also Anderson's more recent "Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, Gaskell: Politics and its Limits," in *The Cambridge History of the English Novel*, ed. Robert L. Caserio and Clement Hawes (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2011), 341-356. While Miller focuses on

Austen's concerns about the highly restricted space allotted for female personhood in Austen's domestic settings (and the comparative freedom that the impersonal narrator is granted), and Anderson analyzes how the narrator-position usefully focused concerns about "cosmopolitanism and the cultivation of detachment" in the Victorian period—both emphasize that, in the nineteenth century, the position of the narrator became increasingly impersonal, and that that impersonality increasingly came to bear the burden of focusing broader theoretical and sociological investigations.

<sup>183</sup> Frances Ferguson, "Jane Austen, *Emma*, and the Impact of Form," *Modern Language Quarterly* 61.1 (2000), 165.

<sup>184</sup> See, for example, Anderson 2001 and 2011.

<sup>185</sup> Brian Southam has persuasively argued that *Northanger Abbey* was the first novel conceived by Austen from the beginning in what he calls "direct narrative" style (61). Her three previous novels—*Lady Susan*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Pride and Prejudice*—were all, Southam claims, originally written as epistolary novels (with the latter two being significantly revised into free indirect style before publication). If Southam is correct, then the atypicality of Austen's narrator (and protagonist) in *Mansfield Park* may be indicative of the extent to which she was self-consciously experimenting with the procedures, capabilities, and limits of free indirect style at this time. Nowhere else in her published work—before or after *Mansfield Park*—do we see Austen so emphatically thinking about the antisocial implications and possibilities of free indirect style.

<sup>186</sup> A point made persuasively by Miller, whose discussion of this topic I will return to shortly. We should think of Austen's narrator as both a continuation of the longer history of intrusive narration that I've traced through Fielding, but also as a reaction against it—a reaction that, importantly, we began to see the formal (if not the social) outlines of in *Waverley*. That's because, the differences between Fielding's narrator and Austen's narrator isn't simply that one is figured as a companionable and humorous fellow, while the other is figured as an impersonal outsider, but that Austen is interested in the repercussions of refusing to be the kind of companionable and socialized person that Fielding's narrator approximates.

<sup>187</sup> This is confirmed by other family sources as well. See *A Memoir of Jane Austen and Other Family Recollections*, 185.

<sup>188</sup> William Galperin, *The Historical Austen* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 157.

<sup>189</sup> Jane Austen to Anna Austen, 28 September 1814, in *Scott: The Critical Heritage*, ed. John O. Hayden (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 74. Extract quoted from R. W. Chapman, ed., *Jane Austen's Letters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1952).

<sup>190</sup> Guillén, 33.

<sup>191</sup> Guillén, 30, 37.

<sup>192</sup> Guillén, 37.

<sup>193</sup> Guillén, 62.

<sup>194</sup> The matter of publication timeline is not irrelevant here. Austen began composing *Northanger Abbey* in 1798, and had sold it by 1803. Scott's *Lay* was published in 1805, and *Marmion* followed a year later in 1806. Finally, *Mansfield Park* was the first novel Austen composed in the second phase of her career as a novelist, and it was published shortly after it was written in 1814. Thus—again, while it is impossible to know the true extent to which Austen consciously or intentionally borrowed from Scott—the publication timeline, along with the other evidence gathered above, is consistent with my argument that Scott's poetry served as a formal ancestor for Austen's novels.

<sup>195</sup> D. A. Miller, *Jane Austen, or, The Secret of Style* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2003), 31.

<sup>196</sup> Kathryn Sutherland's intriguing suggestion about Austen's composition timeline is useful here.

Typically, biographers of Austen (beginning with Austen-Leigh) separate her career as a novelist into two distinct periods—before and after the unsettled years. However, with the exception of *Northanger Abbey*, it is known that Austen revised her major works for publication only after resettling in Chawton. Sometimes these revisions were extensive. Thus, Sutherland writes that “another interpretation of the same evidence and dates . . . might be that, with the exception of *Northanger Abbey* . . . all the finished novels were the products of the mature Chawton years” (xli). Thus, Miller's belief that the antithesis between narrator and character is typical of most of Austen's published work is consistent with my view that Scott's poetry is the poetic ancestor of that approach to narrative form.

<sup>197</sup> Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins, “General Introduction,” in *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2014), 5. For a recent account of the novelistic features of narrative poetry, see Catherine Addison, “*Ottava Rima* and Novelistic Discourse,” *JNT: Journal of Narrative Theory* 34.2 (Summer 2004): 133-145.

<sup>198</sup> Karl Kroeber, *Romantic Narrative Art* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 191-2, 180.

<sup>199</sup> It is very typical of studies of generic interrelation to use “poetry” and “lyric poetry” as interchangeable terms. For a broader discussion of the recent historical emergence of, and limitations to, “the conflation of poetry with lyric,” see Brian McHale, “Beginning to Think about Narrative in Poetry,” *Narrative* 17.1 (January 2009): 11-30, esp. 11-14.

<sup>200</sup> Mary Favret, “Telling Tales about Genre: Poetry in the Romantic Novel,” *Studies in the Novel* 26 (1994): 283.

<sup>201</sup> Ann Wierda Rowland, “Romantic Poetry and the Romantic Novel,” in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), 122.

<sup>202</sup> John Stuart Mill, “What is Poetry?” (1833), in *Essays on Poetry by John Stuart Mill*, ed. F. Parvin Sharpless (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1976), 6-7; M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1953), 23.

<sup>203</sup> J. F. A. Pyre, “Byron in Our Day,” *Atlantic Monthly* (1907); quoted from *Byron: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Andrew Rutherford (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), 491. Hereafter quotations from this edition will be cited according to original source as well as page numbers in *Byron: The Critical Heritage*, abbreviated as *BCH*. Thinking of poetry as uniquely “awakening” a particular kind of emotional content is the foundational premise of an extraordinary variety of recent and influential accounts of poetry. While I can only hope to give a partial list, see, for example: Martin Heidegger, “What Are Poets For?,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Collins, 1971), 89-139; Theodor Adorno, “Lyric Poetry and Society,” in *The Adorno Reader*, ed. Brian O’Connor (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 211-229; Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1984); Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Poetry as Experience*, trans. Andrea Tarnowski (1986; Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1999); G. Gabrielle Starr, *Lyric Generations: Poetry and the Novel in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2004); Susan Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2002); and so on. To be sure, Pyre’s recognition of the new emotional emphasis in conceptions of poetry is not the subject-rupturing conception of literary language employed by Kristeva, nor is it yet a conception of lyric language that escapes the expression of subjectivity theorized by Lacoue-Labarthe—but it does share with these later formulations an emphasis on

emotions (subjective effects) that are “set aside” from all others, and only capable of being aroused by poetry. Poetry is a vehicle to some privileged state of being that one cannot achieve any other way. Moreover, poetry requires “cultivat[ion],” a special kind of attention to detail that is reflected both at the level of composition and in the act of reading. Without this broad reconceptualization of what poetry is or can be, it is difficult to imagine later conceptions of lyric/poetry that seek to invest this privileged state with radical potential.

<sup>204</sup> Marthe Robert, from *Origins of the Novel* (1980), in *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*, ed. Michael McKeon (Baltimore: JHU Press), 58. Robert continues to drive the point home with particular reference to poetry: “The only prohibition [the novel] generally observes, because it defines its ‘prosaic’ nature, is not even compulsory for it can include poetry at will or simply be ‘poetical’.”

<sup>205</sup> Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), 304. Frye’s subsequent discussion of “radicals of presentation” as the distinguishing feature of genres is otherwise uninterested in typical—what he would certainly think of as mistaken—notions of what counts as a novel.

<sup>206</sup> Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981), 9-10.

<sup>207</sup> Jameson, 109.

<sup>208</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, ed. and trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 8.

<sup>209</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art*, trans. Zakir Paul (London: Verso, 2013), x.

<sup>210</sup> Walter Bagehot, “Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning: or Pure, Ornate, and Grotesque Art in English Poetry,” *National Review* (November 1864); *BCH*, 365-367. It is worth noting that this particular critique of Byron was reprinted again in 1879, in *Literary Studies*, ed. R. H. Hutton.

<sup>211</sup> Percy Shelley to Lord Byron, 21 October 1821; *BCH*, 197.

<sup>212</sup> William Roberts, review of *Don Juan*, III-V (1821), *British Review* 18 (Dec. 1821): 245-265, 245-6; quoted from *The Romantics Reviewed: Contemporary Reviews of British Romantic Writers, Part B: Byron and Regency Society Poets*, 5 volumes, ed. Donald H. Reiman (New York: Garland Publishing Company,

1972), 484-485. Hereafter quotations from this edition will be cited according to original source as well as page numbers in *The Romantics Reviewed*, abbreviated as *RR*.

<sup>213</sup> The editors “thought so highly of” this review “that portions of its were reprinted in a four-page advertisement for the journal.” Reiman, headnote to review, *RR*, 791.

<sup>214</sup> Review of *Don Juan* cantos I and II, *Edinburgh Monthly Review* 2 (October 1819): 480; *RR*, 798.

<sup>215</sup> Review of *Don Juan* cantos I and II, *Edinburgh Monthly Review*, 481; *RR*, 798.

<sup>216</sup> Review of *Don Juan* cantos I and II, *Edinburgh Monthly Review*, 482; *RR*, 799.

<sup>217</sup> Review of *Don Juan*, cantos I and II, *The British Critic* 12, 2<sup>nd</sup> series (August 1819): 197; *BCH*, 258-9.

<sup>218</sup> Review of *Don Juan*, cantos III-V, *European Magazine* LXXX (August 1821): 185; *RR*, 980.

<sup>219</sup> Review of *Don Juan*, XII-XIV, *Literary Sketch-Book* (December 6, 1823): 257-258, (December 20, 1823): 296-297; *RR*, 1569-1570.

<sup>220</sup> This is a rhetorical move made by many reviewers of *Don Juan*. Thus, the *British Magazine* criticizes the “ribald stuff which disfigures” the majority of cantos VI-VIII, despite the occasional “verses full of poetry.” (Review of *Don Juan*, cantos VI-VIII, *British Magazine* I (August 1823): 273-276; *RR*, 390-391.

<sup>221</sup> Review of *Don Juan*, XII-XIV, *Literary Sketch-Book*, 296-297; *RR*, 1570.

<sup>222</sup> John Henry Newman, “Poetry, With Reference to Aristotle’s Poetics,” *London Review* (1829); *BCH*, 279-280.

<sup>223</sup> Review of *Don Juan* cantos I and II, *Edinburgh Monthly Review*, 482; *RR*, 799.

<sup>224</sup> Review of *Don Juan*, cantos III-V, *Imperial Magazine* 3 (October 1821): 945-948; *RR*, 1155-1156.

<sup>225</sup> Review of *Don Juan* cantos I and II, *Miniature Magazine* 3 (October 1819): 236-239; *RR*, 1642-1644.

<sup>226</sup> Review of *Don Juan*, cantos III, IV and V, *Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany; a New Series of Scots Magazine* (August 1821): 105-6; *BCH*, 260.

<sup>227</sup> Related responses, which I won’t try the reader’s patience by recording here, include: that Byron, his poem, and his talent have all variously “prostituted” themselves, that *Don Juan* displays deformities that ought to be destroyed in their birth, that the poem (and poet) are unmanly, and so on.

<sup>228</sup> John Galt, *Life of Byron* (1830); *BCH*, 282.

<sup>229</sup> Review of *Don Juan*, VI-VIII and IX-XI, *Gentleman’s Magazine* XCIII-ii (September 1823): 250-252; *RR*, 1142-1144.

- <sup>230</sup> Review of *Don Juan*, IX-XI, *Edinburgh Magazine* 13 (September 1823): 357; *BCH*, 260-261.
- <sup>231</sup> Review of *Don Juan*, VI-VIII, *Literary Gazette* (July 19, 1823): 451-453, *RR*, 1461-1463; Review of *Don Juan*, IX-XI, *Literary Gazette* (1823): 562-563, *RR*, 164-1465.
- <sup>232</sup> Review of *Don Juan*, VI-VIII, *Literary Gazette*, 452; *RR*, 1462.
- <sup>233</sup> William Wordsworth, "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*, in William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones (London: Routledge, 1991), 252.
- <sup>234</sup> For a compelling look at the evolution of this claim over several installments of *Don Juan*, see the *Literary Chronicle*: review of *Don Juan*, I-II (July 17, 1819): 129-30; review of *Don Juan*, III-V (August 11, 1821): 495-497; review of *Don Juan*, VI-VIII (July 19, 1823): 451-453; review of *Don Juan*, XII-XIV (December 6, 1823): 769-771. The quote is from the review of cantos VI-VIII, *RR*, 1341.
- <sup>235</sup> John Addington Symonds, in *The English Poets*, vol. 4., ed. T. H. Ward (1880); *BCH*, 416.
- <sup>236</sup> Symonds; *BCH*, 417-418.
- <sup>237</sup> Algernon Charles Swinburne, "Wordsworth and Byron," *Nineteenth Century* (April/May 1884); *BCH*, 464-476.
- <sup>238</sup> Swinburne, "Wordsworth and Byron"; *BCH*, 468-9.
- <sup>239</sup> I have, in this section, attempted to diagnose a range of the main response-types that characterize the negating impulse in the nineteenth century. There are several that were not discussed, however, and I'd like here briefly to indicate what some of these were. They include: a conviction that in the writing of *Don Juan*, Byron had "fallen off" from a great poetic destiny; that while Byron *is* a great poet, *Don Juan* is an immoral poem; and a conviction by some journals (particularly the *Literary Chronicle*) that every installment of *Don Juan* was the most immoral, and least poetic thing that Byron had ever written (including all previous cantos of *Don Juan*).
- <sup>240</sup> Samuel Chew, *Byron in England: His Fame and After-Fame* (London: John Murray, 1924), chapter XII.
- <sup>241</sup> W. P. Trent, "The Byron Revival," *The Forum* 26 (1898): 242-256, 242; Paul Elmer More, "The Wholesome Revival of Byron," *The Atlantic Monthly* 82.494 (December 1898): 801-809.
- <sup>242</sup> For a detailed account not only of this publication history, but also for a sense of the surprise and relief that Byron was finally regaining some of his popular traction, see Trent, 242-245.
- <sup>243</sup> Trent, 247.



<sup>244</sup> W. E. Henley, quoted in Trent, 247.

<sup>245</sup> Chew, "The Centenary of *Don Juan*," *The American Journal of Philology* 40.2 (1919): 117-152, 148.

<sup>246</sup> Trent, 248.

<sup>247</sup> Oliver Elton, *A Survey of English Literature 1780-1880*, 4 vol. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920), chapter XVII, "Byron," 2:135-182, 145.

<sup>248</sup> Elton, 136-7.

<sup>249</sup> The idea that Byron's poetry and prose shared an essentially similar spirit—a view that is different from the claim that *Don Juan* is a novel—has continued to enjoy some popular appeal. See, for example, Andrew Nicholson, "Byron's Prose," in *The Cambridge Companion to Byron*, ed. Drummond Bone (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), 186-206. Nicholson argues that "the same impetus that drives [Byron's] poetry drives his fictional prose, but not with the same degree of success: in prose he is . . . all too apt to run into 'reality'" (188).

<sup>250</sup> Elton, 137.

<sup>251</sup> Elton, 174.

<sup>252</sup> Kroeber, 148-149. See chapter One in this dissertation for a fuller discussion of Kroeber's account of the relation between Romantic-era poetry and the novel of the nineteenth century.

<sup>253</sup> Kroeber, 159.

<sup>254</sup> Kroeber, 166-167. See also Richard Lansdown, "The Novelized Poem & the Poeticized Novel: Byron's *Don Juan* & Victorian Fiction," *The Critical Review* 39 (1999): 119-141. Lansdown writes that *Don Juan* "play[s] a part in the generation of certain specific features—small and large—of the Victorian novel; or if not to generate them exactly, then help in their transmission from the novel as it was understood in Byron's era to the novel of Dickens and George Eliot" (130). This can be seen as a more detailed, and *Don-Juan* oriented, version of Kroeber's argument about the relation between 19<sup>th</sup>-century narrative poetry and the novel.

<sup>255</sup> See also Elizabeth Boyd, *Byron's Don Juan* (New York: The Humanities Press, 1958), where she argues that *Don Juan* "must be judged as a novel, on its merits as a story, if we care to understand what Byron has to say through it" (59).

<sup>256</sup> Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 58-9.

<sup>257</sup> Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1981), 3.

<sup>258</sup> Bakhtin, 5-6.

<sup>259</sup> Bakhtin, 7.

<sup>260</sup> Michael Aucouturier, "The Theory of the Novel in Russia in the 1930s: Lukács and Bakhtin," in *The Russian Novel from Pushkin to Pasternak*, ed. John Garrard (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1983), 227-240, 228. This article usefully identifies similarities and differences between Lukács and Bakhtin's theory of the novel.

<sup>261</sup> Catherine Addison, "Ottava Rima and Novelistic Discourse," *JNT: Journal of Narrative Theory* 34.2 (Summer 2004): 133-145. Quotes in this paragraph are taken, respectively, from 133 and 143.

<sup>262</sup> Elton, 180.

<sup>263</sup> Review of *Don Juan*, III-V, *Gentleman's Magazine* XCII-i (January 1822): 48-50; *RR*, 1128-1130. [Reviewed by a Correspondent]

<sup>264</sup> M. K. Joseph, "The Artist and the Mirror: The Narrator in *Don Juan*" (1964), in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Don Juan: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Edward E. Bostetter (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1969), 36.

<sup>265</sup> Samuel Johnson, *Dryden* (1779), in *Samuel Johnson: The Major Works*, ed. Donald Greene (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 717.

<sup>266</sup> Johnson, *Dryden*, 723.

<sup>267</sup> Johnson, *Dryden*, 717.

<sup>268</sup> Alexander Pope, *An Essay On Criticism* (1711), in *Alexander Pope: The Major Works*, ed. Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 17-39; lines 337ff.

<sup>269</sup> Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews* (1742), ed. Douglas Brooks-Davies (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 3-4; Fielding, *Tom Jones* (1749), ed. John Bender and Simon Stern (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 132.

<sup>270</sup> Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*, 77.

<sup>271</sup> Fielding, *Tom Jones*, 425.

<sup>272</sup> Fielding, *Tom Jones*, 68-9.

<sup>273</sup> Fielding, *Tom Jones*, 132.

<sup>274</sup> Johnson, *The Rambler*, No. 4, Saturday, 31 March 1750, in *Samuel Johnson: The Major Works*, 175.

<sup>275</sup> John Stuart Mill, "What is Poetry?" (1833), in *Essays on Poetry by John Stuart Mill*, ed. F. Parvin Sharpless (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1976), 4-5, 6.

<sup>276</sup> William Hazlitt, "On Poetry in General" (1818), in *Hazlitt on English Literature: An Introduction to the Appreciation of Literature*, ed. Jacob Zeitlin (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1913), 268-70.

<sup>277</sup> Hazlitt, 268.

<sup>278</sup> Matthew Arnold, "The Study of Poetry" (1880), in Matthew Arnold, *English Literature and Irish Politics*, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor: The Univ. of Michigan Press, 1973), 180-1. Originally published as the General Introduction to *The English Poets*, ed. T. H. Ward (1880).

<sup>279</sup> Johnson, *Pope* (1781), in *Samuel Johnson: The Major Works*, 752.

<sup>280</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (1815-17), in *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Major Works*, ed. H. J. Jackson (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 348.

<sup>281</sup> Coleridge, 316, 318.

<sup>282</sup> This set of requirements leads Coleridge to admit that "if a man chooses to call every composition a poem which is rhyme, or measure, or both, I must leave his opinion uncontroverted" (317).

<sup>283</sup> Coleridge, 350.

<sup>284</sup> Coleridge, 350.

<sup>285</sup> Coleridge, 353.

<sup>286</sup> Percy Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry* (1821), in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, second edition, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat (New York: Norton: 2002), 514 (emphasis added).

<sup>287</sup> Shelley, 514-15.

<sup>288</sup> Shelley, 514.

<sup>289</sup> See Jonathan Culler, "Why Lyric?," *PMLA* 123.1 (2008): 201-206 for a contemporary version of this view.

<sup>290</sup> Mill, 8.

<sup>291</sup> Mill, 9.

<sup>292</sup> Mill, 5.

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